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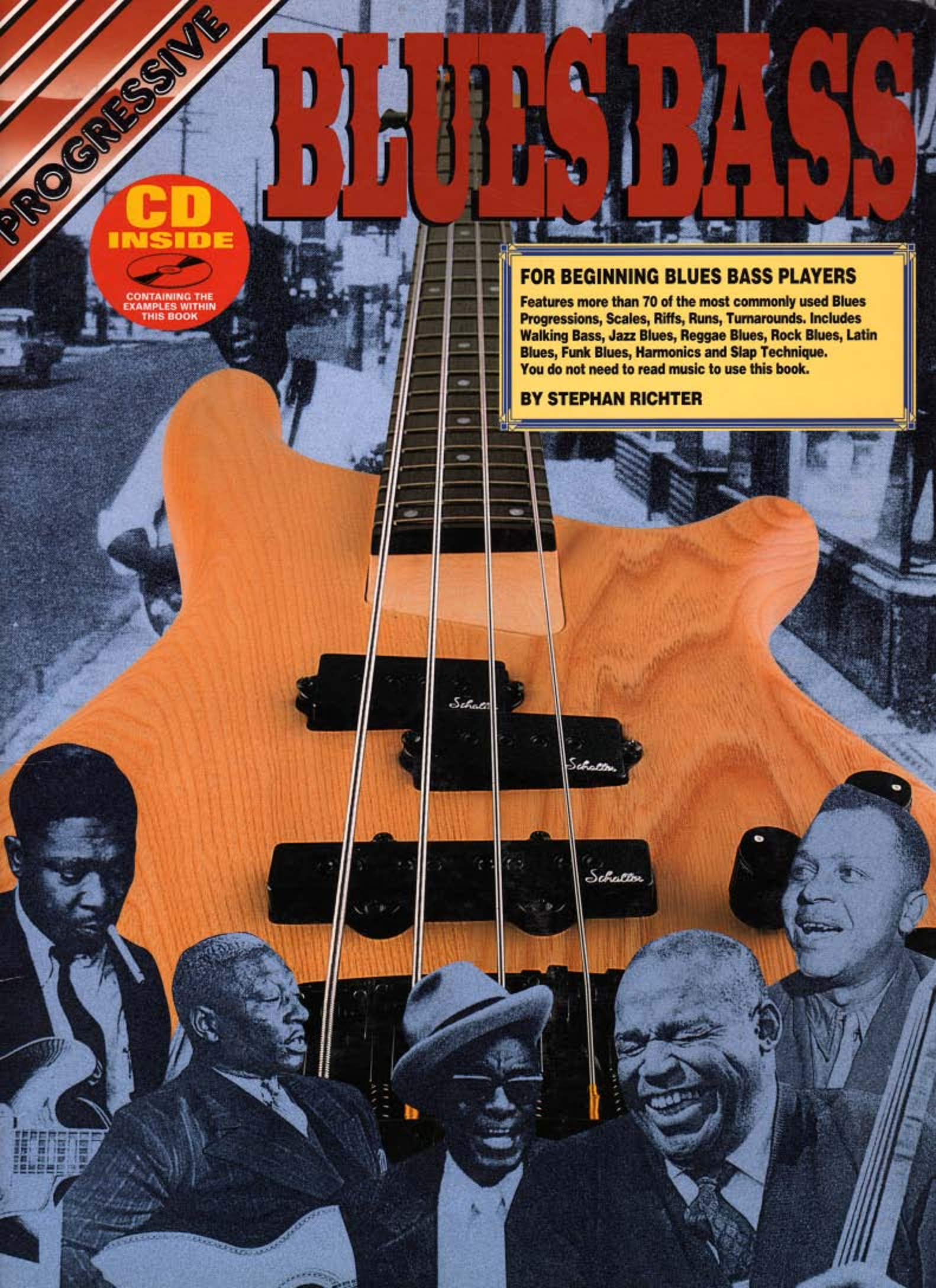

Progressive

BLUES BASS

by
Stephan Richter

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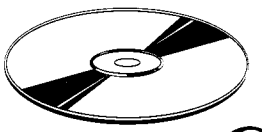

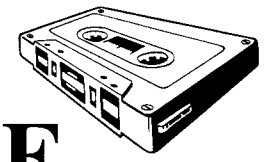

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Use and Function of CD/Tape and Metronome

The CD/Tape

The CD/Tape has two functions:

1. As an indication of how the example should sound, and
2. By using as indicated, it gives you the opportunity to play along with another musical instrument. Part of any music practise is to play along with other instruments.

You may have to practise the examples at a slower speed before attempting to play along with the recording. The metronome therefore, is useful as you can adjust it to the speed you want.

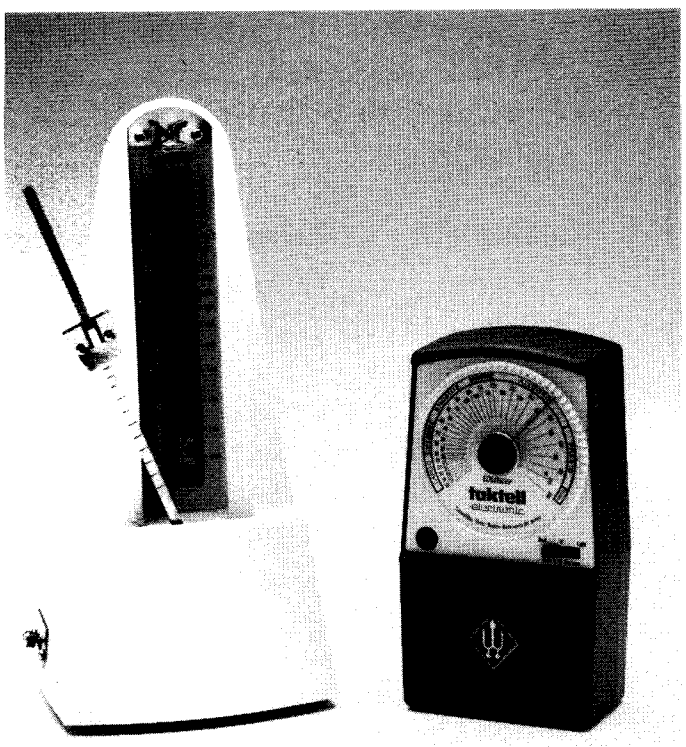
The Metronome

A metronome is a mechanical or electronic device that divides time into equal beats by producing a ticking or bleeping sound. The number of beats per minute is adjustable so that you can vary the speed at which you wish to play a piece of music.

The metronome has three functions:

1. It indicates what tempo a tune should be played at by sounding the number of beats per minute.

   e.g. ♩ = 60: in this caes it tells us that a beat (quarter note) is exactly one second.
2. It acts as a control for your timing so that you don't rush or slow down during your playing.
3. It helps you by gradually increasing the tempo on the number scale until you can play at the desired speed.



Introduction

This book introduces the beginner to the basics of playing Blues Bass guitar. No previous knowledge of bass guitar playing or music is required. All techniques and music theory are gradually introduced in a very easy and clear way using over 70 examples, however, for more detailed information see *Introducing Bass by Stephan Richter.* You do not need to read music to use this book, however, both music and tablature notation are used to show the position of the notes on the fretboard. A metronome or a drum machine is suggested to help you develop your rhythm and keep time. The emphasis of this book is to get the student to play interesting music on the bass, and even the early exercises sound great!

It is recommended that you use the CD/cassette tape that is available for this book. It contains all the examples within, and you will learn faster when you are able to hear what the example sounds like and play along with the backing band. As the bass player is part of the rhythm section, it is essential to play together as often and as soon as possible with other instruments, especially drums. Chord symbols are placed above some examples so that a guitarist can play along with the bass guitar. Note that the fingering is only a possible suggestion and it is often a personal choice what feels more natural or comfortable. In some instances you may want to change the fingering to suit your playing style. The standard fingering on a bass is one finger per fret.

It is important to have a correct approach to practice. You will benefit from several short practices (e.g. 15-30 minutes per day) than one or two long sessions per week. This is especially so in the early stages, because of the basic nature of the material being studied. In a practice session you should divide your time evenly between the study of new material and the revision of past work. It is a common mistake for semi-advanced students to practise only the pieces they can already play well. Although this is more enjoyable, it is not a very satisfactory method of practice. You should also endeavour to correct mistakes and experiment with new ideas.

You should combine the study of this book with constant experimentation and listening to other players. It is the author's belief that the guidance of an experienced teacher will be an invaluable aid in your progress.

Progressive Blues Bass Licks

Progressive Blues Bass Licks is designed to be used in conjunction with this manual. All the techniques, scales and progressions illustrated in this book are also covered in Progressive Blues Bass Licks as extra supplementary material.

Stephan Richter obtained his degree in Classical Music (Cello major) at the Zurich Conservatorium of Music in Switzerland. He further studied in New York on Electric Bass with Rick Laird and Tony Oppenheim. He currently works as a session musician and teacher. Stephan is author of Progressive Slap Technique for Bass, Tapping Technique for Bass, Heavy Metal Method and Heavy Metal Techniques for Bass, Heavy Metal Licks Volumes 1 and 2, Progressive Bass Guitar Licks, Introducing Bass, Rhythm Section Method, Rhythm Section Grooves, Rock Bass and Rock Licks.

Notation

Two methods of music notation are presented in this book; namely notes and tablature. You need only use one of these methods, whichever is most convenient (if you are not familiar with note reading follow the tablature outlined below).

Music Notation

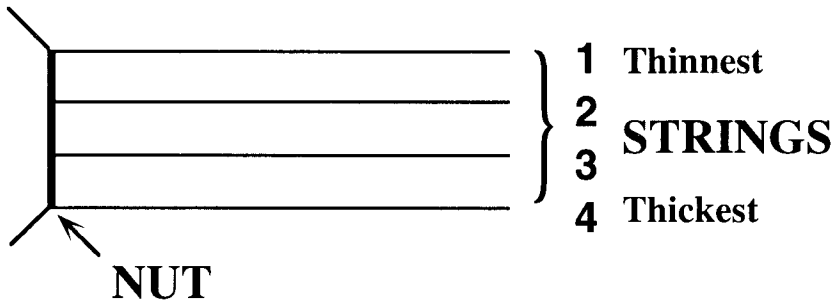
In order to use the music in this book it will be helpful to have a previous knowledge of music reading, *Introducing Bass by Stephan Richter* or *Progressive Bass by Gary Turner and Brenton White* will assist with this.

If you already have experience with reading music you will find it useful to refer to the tablature sometimes to determine the correct position of an example.

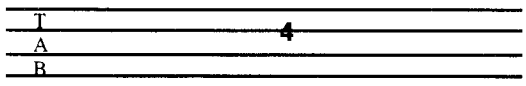
Finally for music readers; the key signature for some examples has been ommitted, with the relevant sharps and flats notated in the music. This has been done to simplify the music for ease of reading.

Tablature

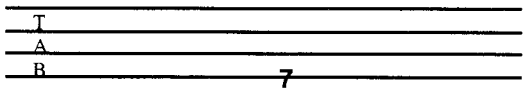
Tablature is a method of indicating the position of notes on the fretboard. There are four "tab" lines, each representing one of the four strings on the bass.



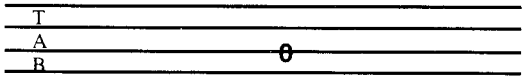
When a number is placed on one of the lines, it indicates the fret location of a note, e.g.



This indicates the 4th fret of the second string (an F♯ note).



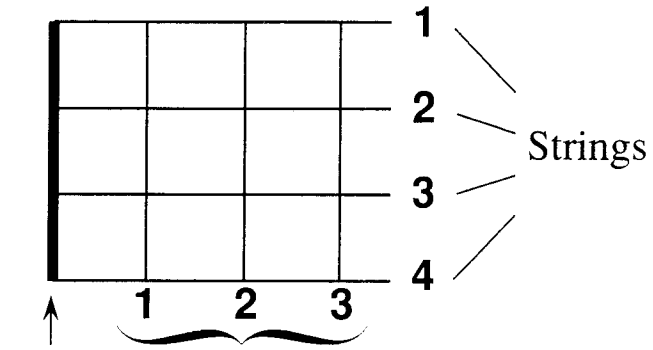
This indicates the 7th fret of the fourth string (a B note).

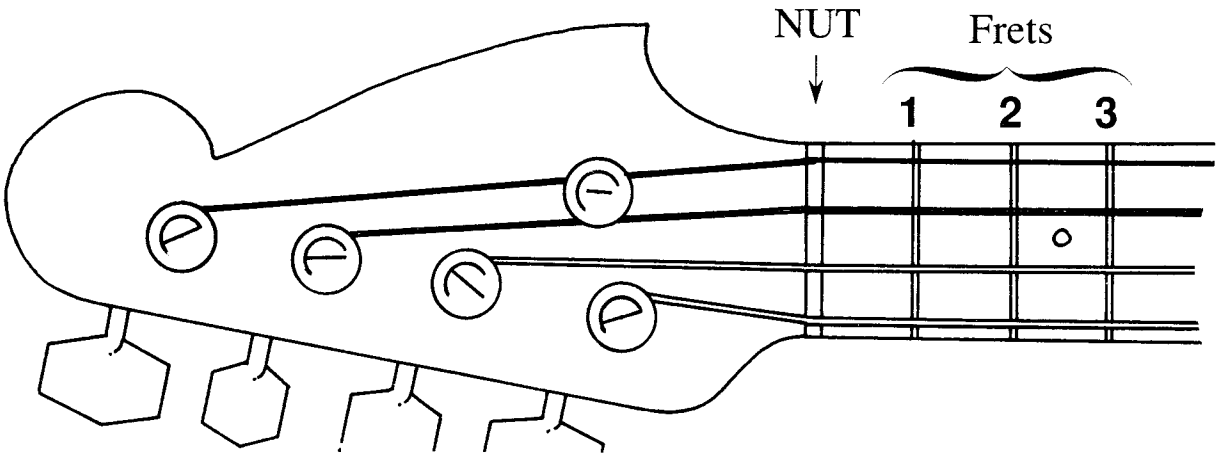


This indicates the third string open (an A note).

Fretboard Diagram

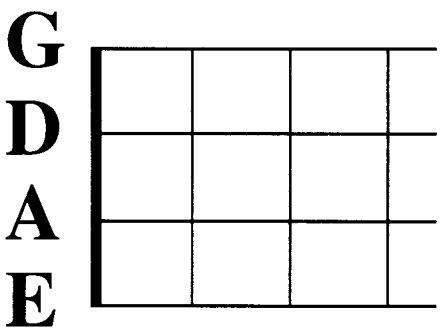
A fretboard diagram is a grid pattern of strings (vertical lines) and frets (horizontal lines) which is used to indicate the position of notes.



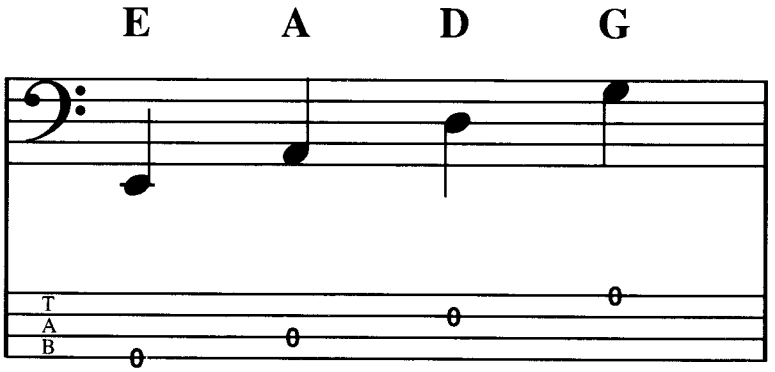


Open String Notes

The following fretboard diagram illustrates the four open string notes of the bass guitar.

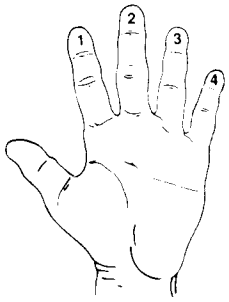


Here are the four open string notes in music and tablature notation.



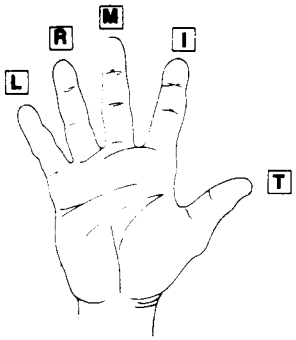
Symbols and Abbreviations

The Left Hand



1 = Index finger
2 = Middle finger
3 = Ring finger
4 = Little finger
0 = no finger - open string

The Right Hand



T = Thumb
I = Index finger
M = Middle finger
R = Ring finger
L = Little finger

staccato (short detached note)

Hammer-on; generate the sound of a note with the force of your "fretting" finger. Do not "pick" the note.

Quick Hammer-on

Slide - into the indicated note

Slide - only the first note is picked

Slide - commence the slide somewhere further up the neck

Slide - quick

PO Pull-off

Vibrato

X Ghost Notes - mute

Harmonic

T Thumb Slap

P Popping Effect

HA Hammer-Attack

SECTION I

Basic Technique
Basic 12 Bar Blues

Johnny Copeland, Robert Cray & Albert Collins

Playing Position

To have a comfortable playing position, it is best to use a strap. A wide strap, approx. 2-3 inches (8-10cm) is best, so that the weight of the bass is evenly distributed. Adjust the strap to a lenght that is comfortable. The full weight of the bass should be resting on the shoulder strap.

The bass should be angled slightly upwards (see photo), so that your left arm is free to move while you play.

Whether you prefer to sit or stand while you play, make sure that the position of your bass (strap length and angle) is the same so that your playing won't be affected.

Keep the bass close to your body so that it is easy to reach all parts of it when you play.

① Standing Position

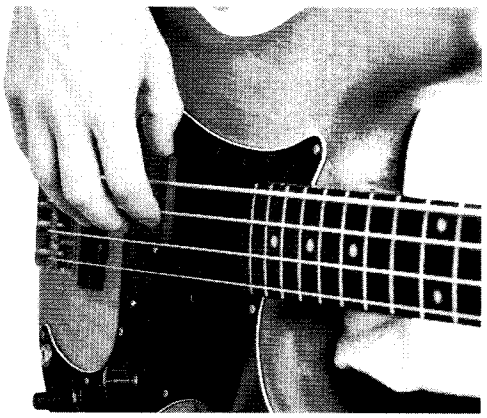
② Sitting Position

Sitting Position:
Sit on a stool with a foot rest to raise your right leg, or just cross your right leg over your left.

The Right Hand

Anchoring of the Thumb

To get a steady feel and sound it is important to anchor your hand. The best way of doing this is by placing the thumb on the top of the pick-up (see photo).

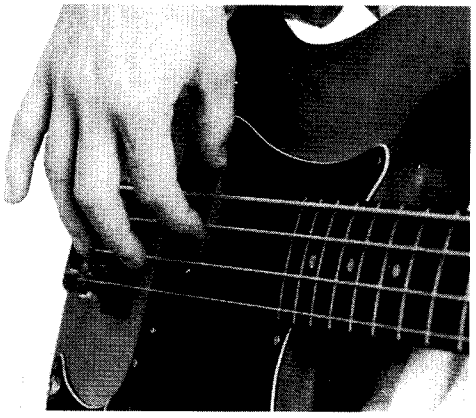


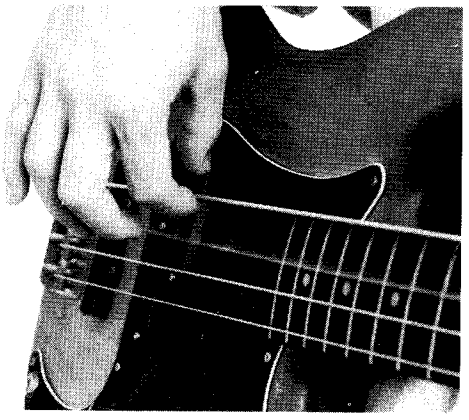
Most modern bass guitars have two pick-ups. One close to the fretboard and a second one nearer the bridge. In the early stages of playing it may be easier to place your thumb on the front pick-up as the string tension is not quite as "hard" as on the back pick-up. The tone will also sound fuller and heavier, and it will also be easier for your right hand fingers to play the strings.

You should also experiment by playing with your thumb resting on the back pick-up, as the sound is clearer and has more attack and "bite".

Playing with the Fingers

When playing notes, the rest stroke is used. The rest stroke involves the finger picking the string and then coming to rest on the next string. The photos below illustrate the movement of the index finger in playing the rest stroke. i.e. pick the A string and come to rest on the E string.





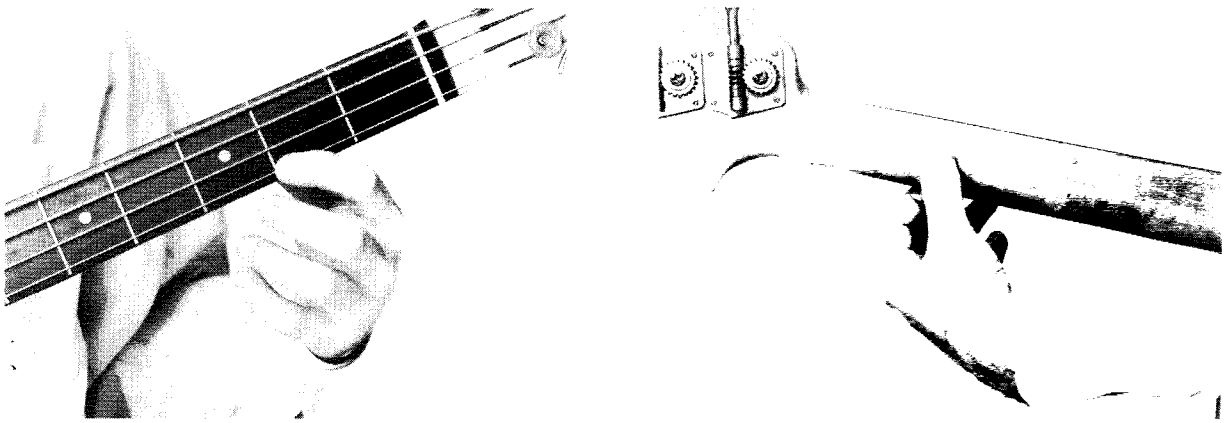
Playing with Alternating Fingers

Alternate between your index and middle fingers. Anchor your thumb on the pick-up and strike the open G string with your index finger in the same fashion as with the rest stroke technique. As soon as it comes to rest on the next lower string (D string) pick the open G string again, this time using your middle finger. Maintain this alternating movement between the two fingers. Make sure one of the two fingers is always resting on the D string while the other one is picking the G string and vice versa.

Always use this alternating finger style as it will give you more possibilities when changing between notes and strings.

The Left Hand

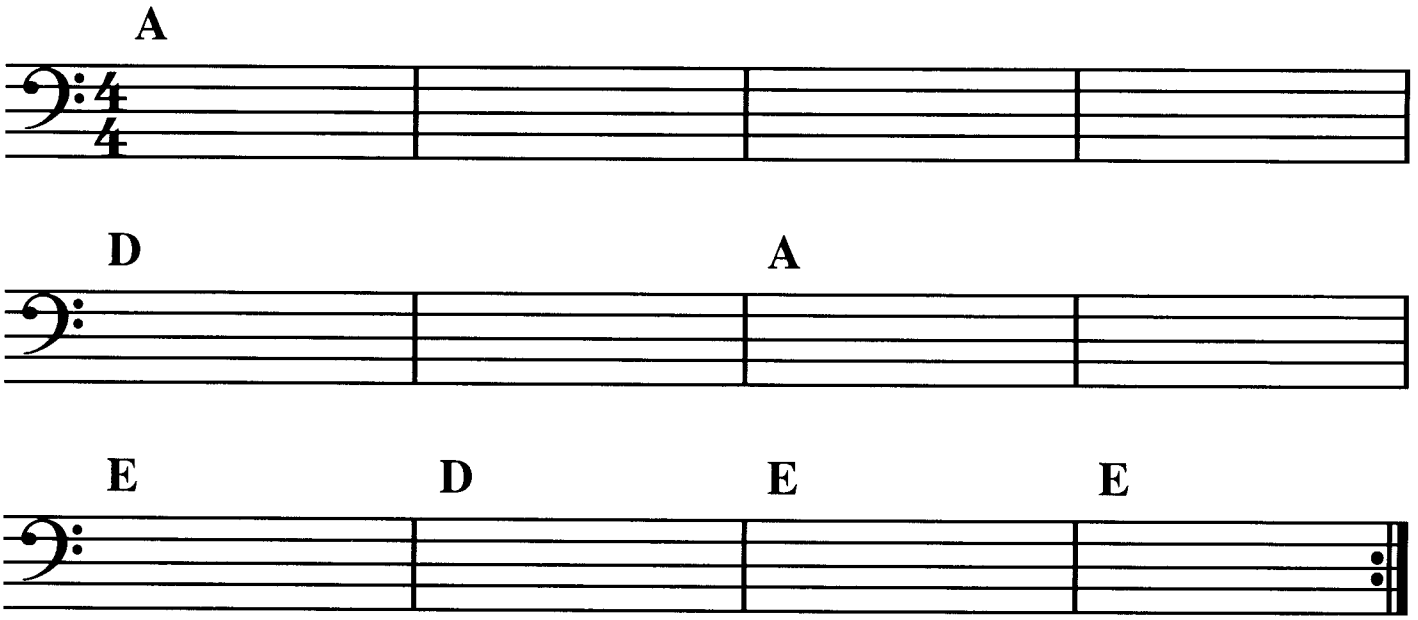
Place the first finger of your left hand just behind the second fret of the G string. This note is an A note. Play this new note with your right hand index finger. Listen to the sound. It should sound full and round. If it buzzes or rattles you have not placed your left hand finger close enough to the fret or you are not pressing the string down hard enough.



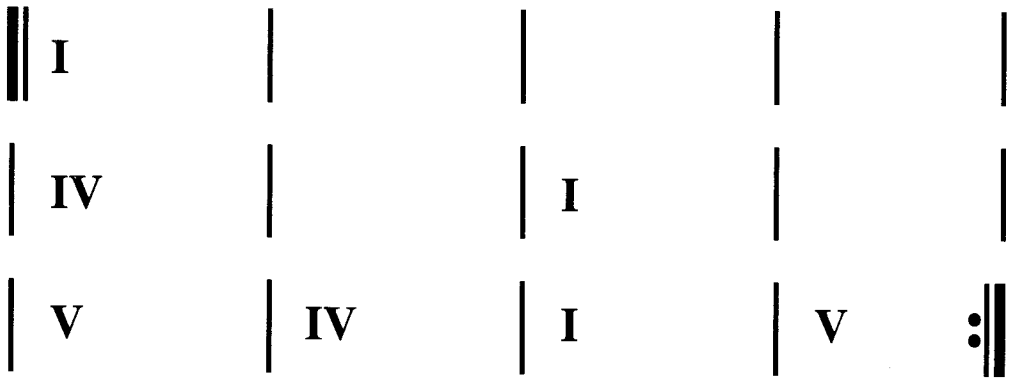
For greater support the left hand thumb should be placed behind the neck of the bass guitar, approximately opposite your index and middle fingers as shown in the photo above.

The 12 Bar Blues Progression

12 Bar Blues is a pattern of chords in a particular order which repeats every 12 bars. This progression is the most widely used progression in Blues. An example of this sequence is shown below.

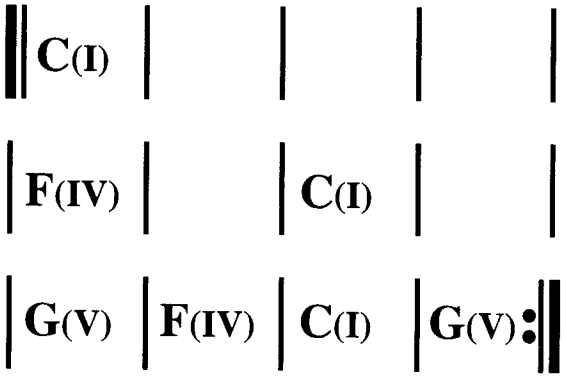


Roman numerals are often used to replace chord symbols to indicate the basic chords used in 12 bar progressions. It is important for you to remember that 12 bar blues in any key uses the 3 chords, **I**, **IV** and **V** in the following sequence.

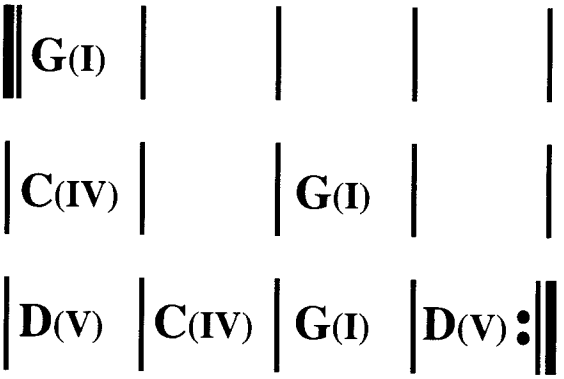


For example in the key of C the **I**, **IV** and **V** chords are C, F and G respectively. In the key of G the **I**, **IV** and **V** chords are G, C and D.

12 Bar in C



12 Bar in G



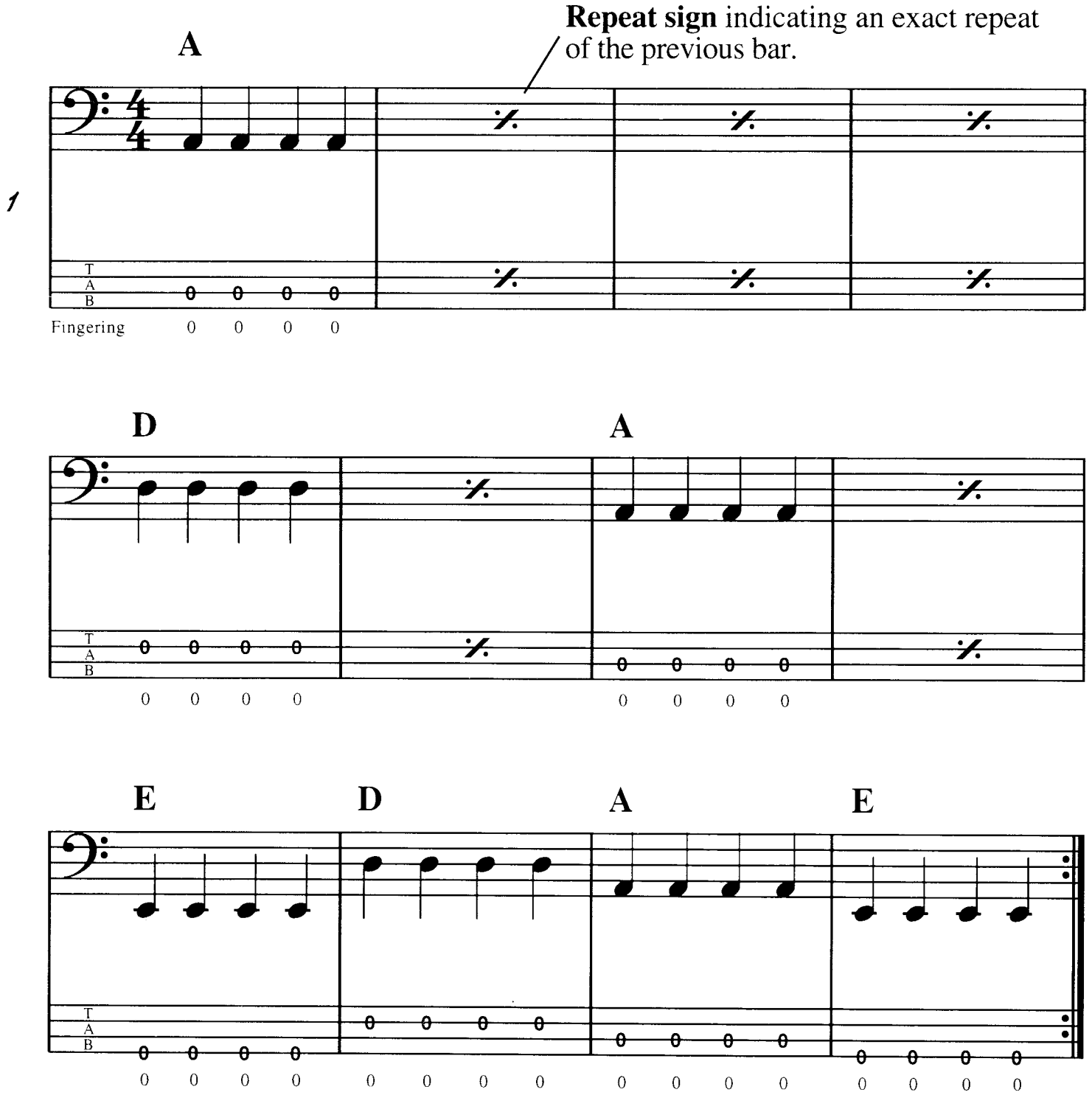
Memorize the whole 12 bar sequence.

Basic Blues Feel (Quarter Notes)

The first exercise applies open strings to a 12 bar Blues progression..

Quarter notes are used throughout this exercise. There are four quarter notes in each bar of $\frac{4}{4}$ time.

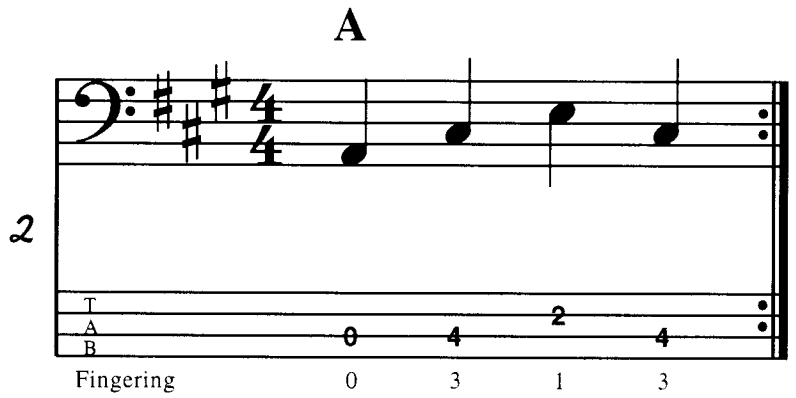
Example 1 uses a **root note** bass for each chord. A root note is the note with the same name as the chord and will always blend well with that chord.

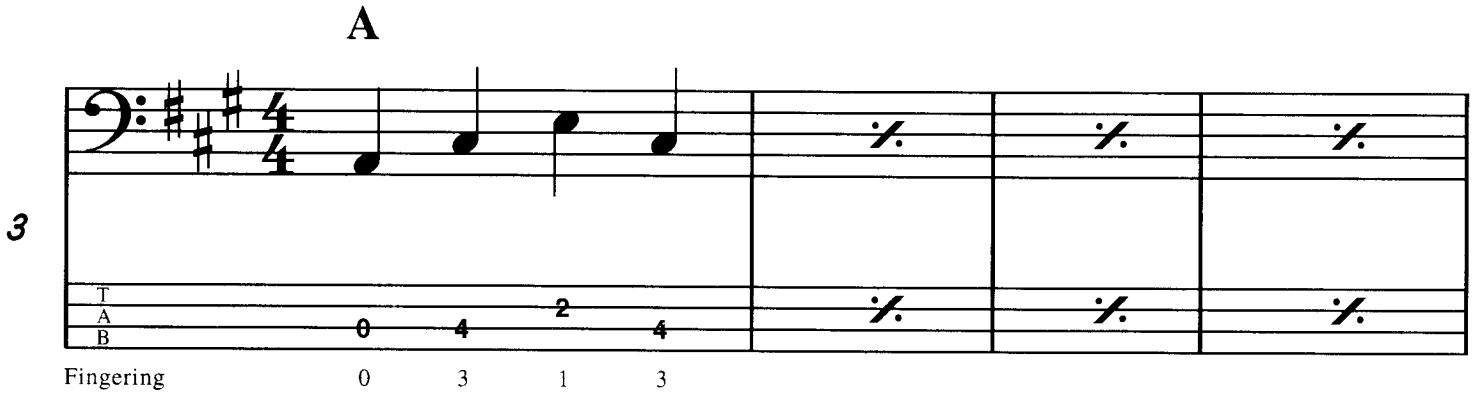


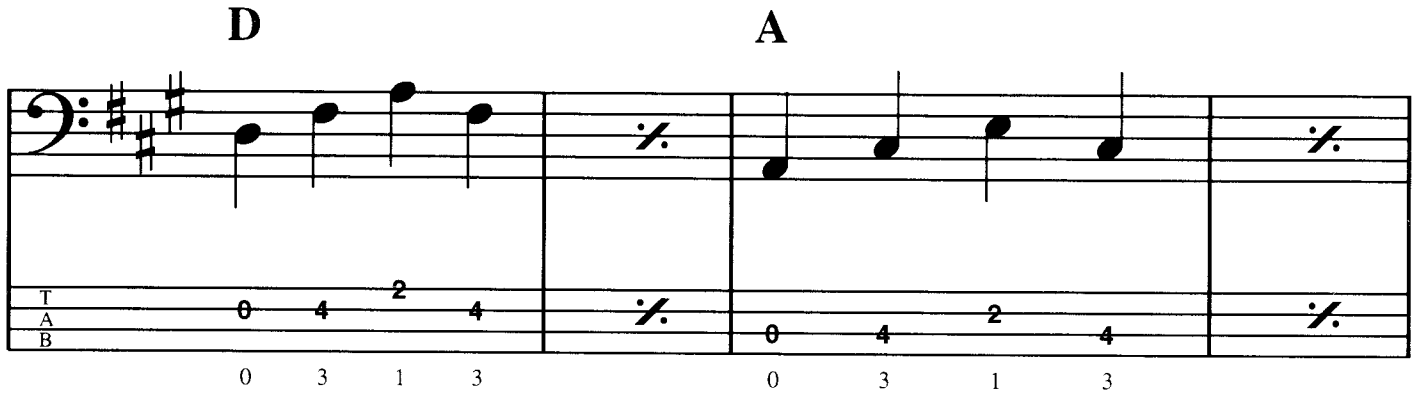
Riffs

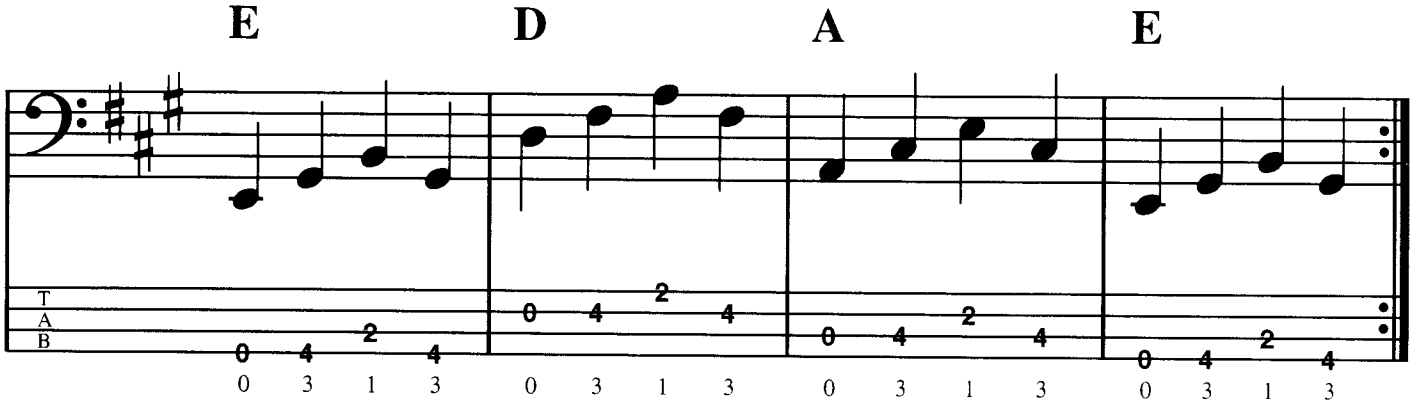
Bass guitarists often use a technique of playing "riffs" against a chord progression. A riff is a pattern of notes that is repeated throughout a progression (or song).

Example 2 and 3 use all the notes within each chord, i.e. the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of the Major scale relating to each chord. To play the notes of a chord one after another is often refered to as **arpeggio** playing.







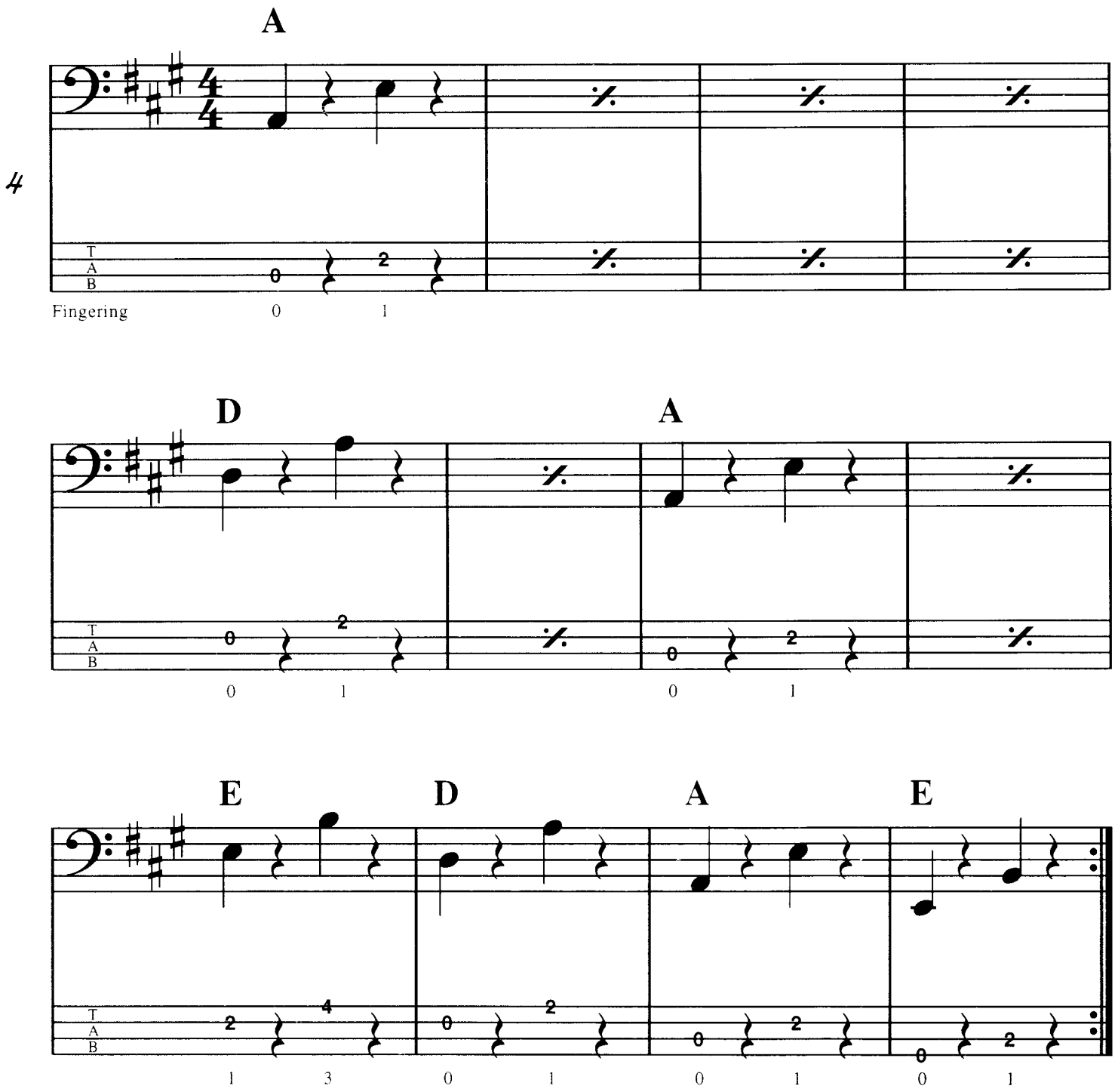


You have probably heard this riff style of playing before. Play some records (fifties rock and roll or blues songs would be best) and listen to the bass.

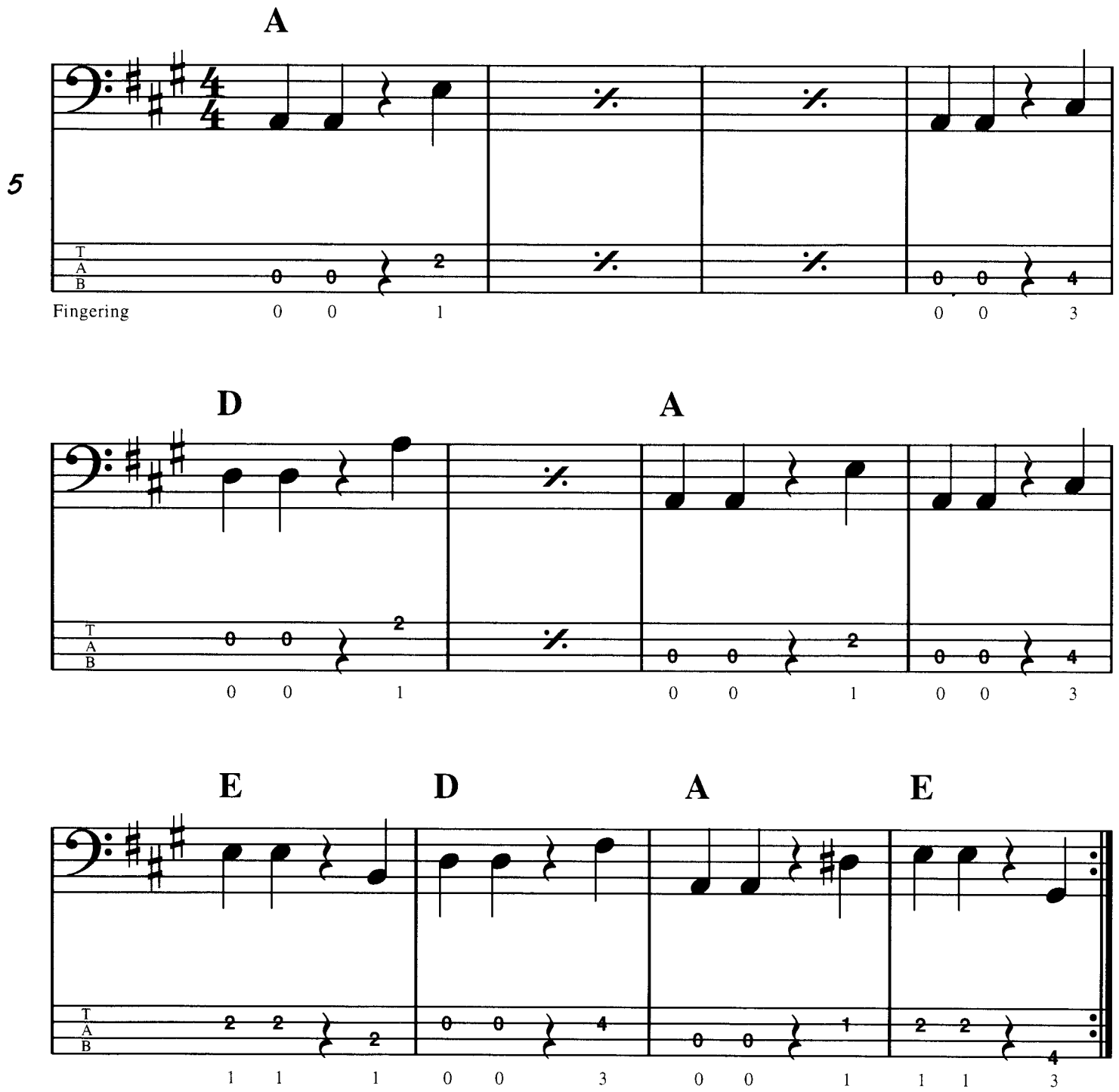
Half Time Feel (Quarter Note Rests)

In example 4 only the root note and the 5th note within each chord are played. This time the 3rd note has been ommited.

Quarter note rests are introduced on the 2nd and 4th beat of each bar. This helps to give a broken up feel sometimes refered as a half time feel.



In example 5 the quarter note rest appears in each bar on the third beat only. The first two beats repeat the root note. The last beat of each bar varies which note of the chord is used, somtimes the 3rd, sometimes the fifth.

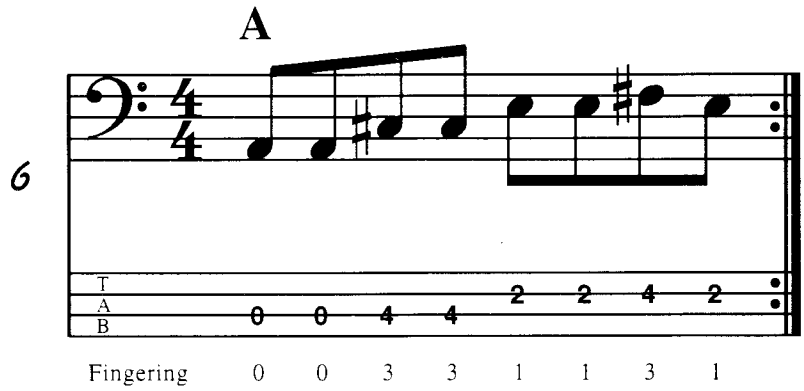


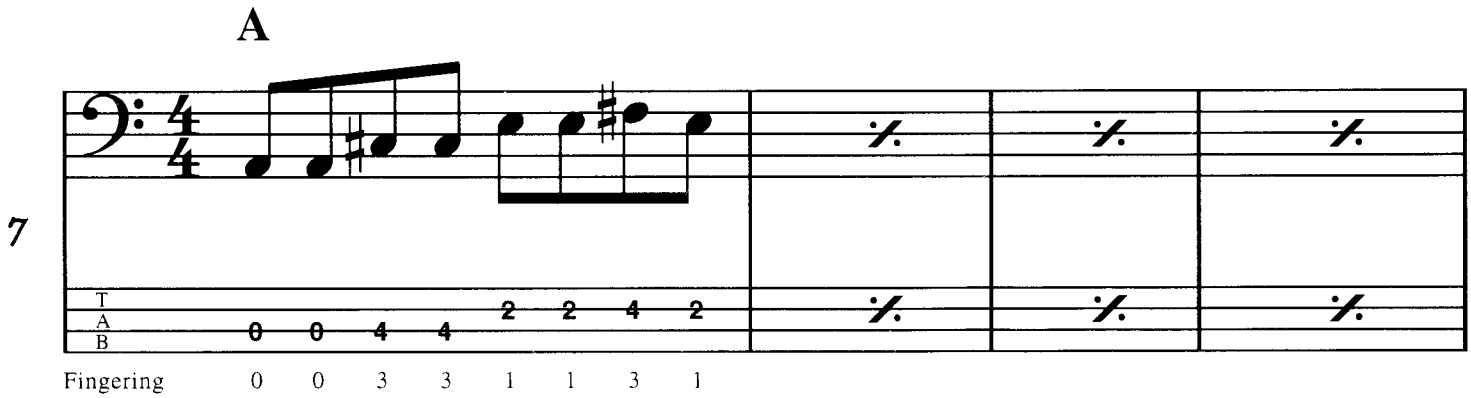
Eighth Note Feel

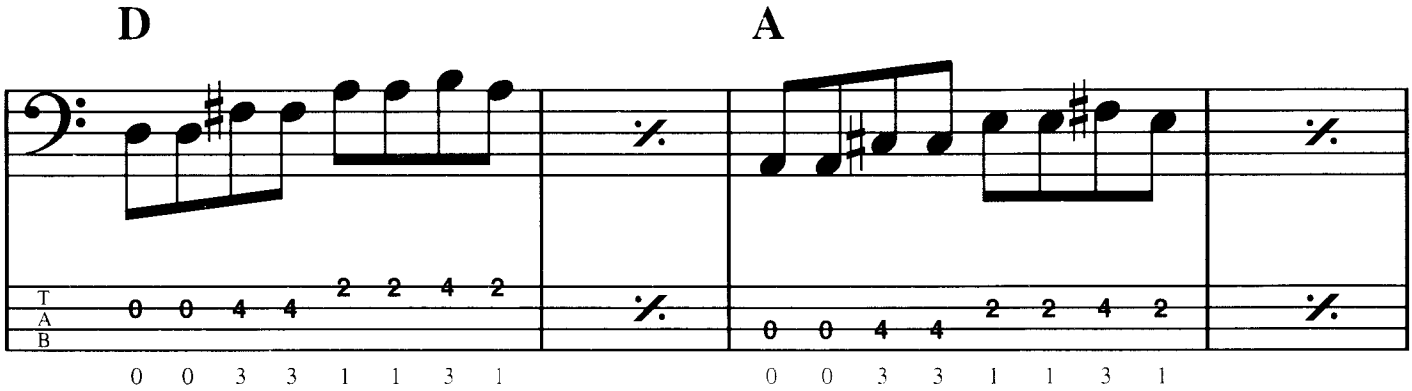
Examples 6 and 7 introduce the eighth note (♫).

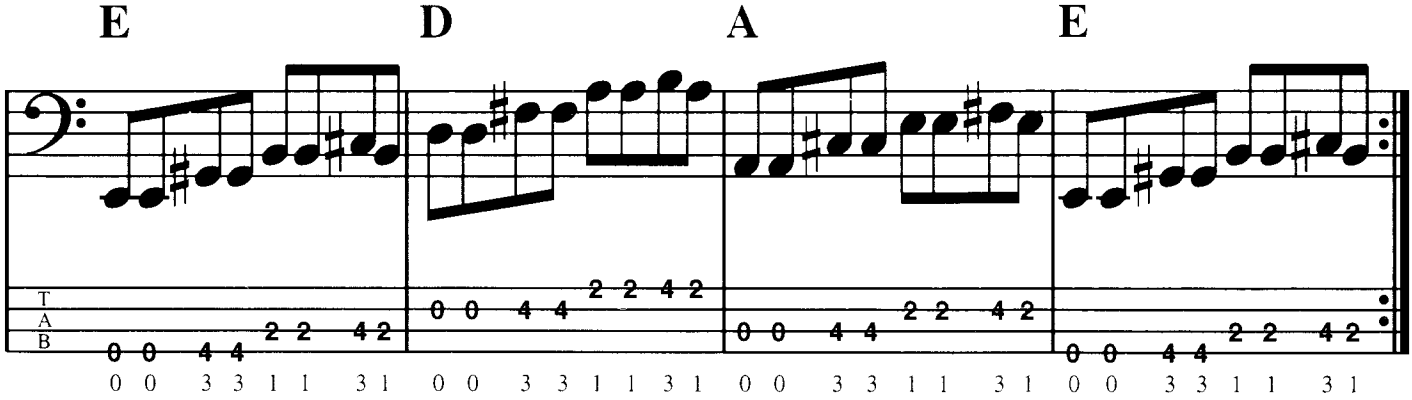
In Blues and other popular contemporary music eighth note rhythm patterns are very common because of their "strong drive" especially when some of the notes are repeated.

For ease of playing, use the 1st and 3rd fingers as indicated, and when changing from E to F♯ leave the first finger down in preparation for the next E note. In example 7 this riff is applied to a 12 bar blues in the key of A.

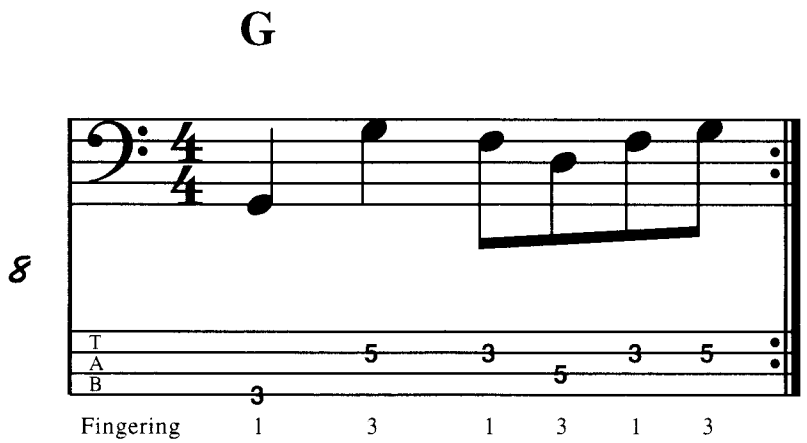




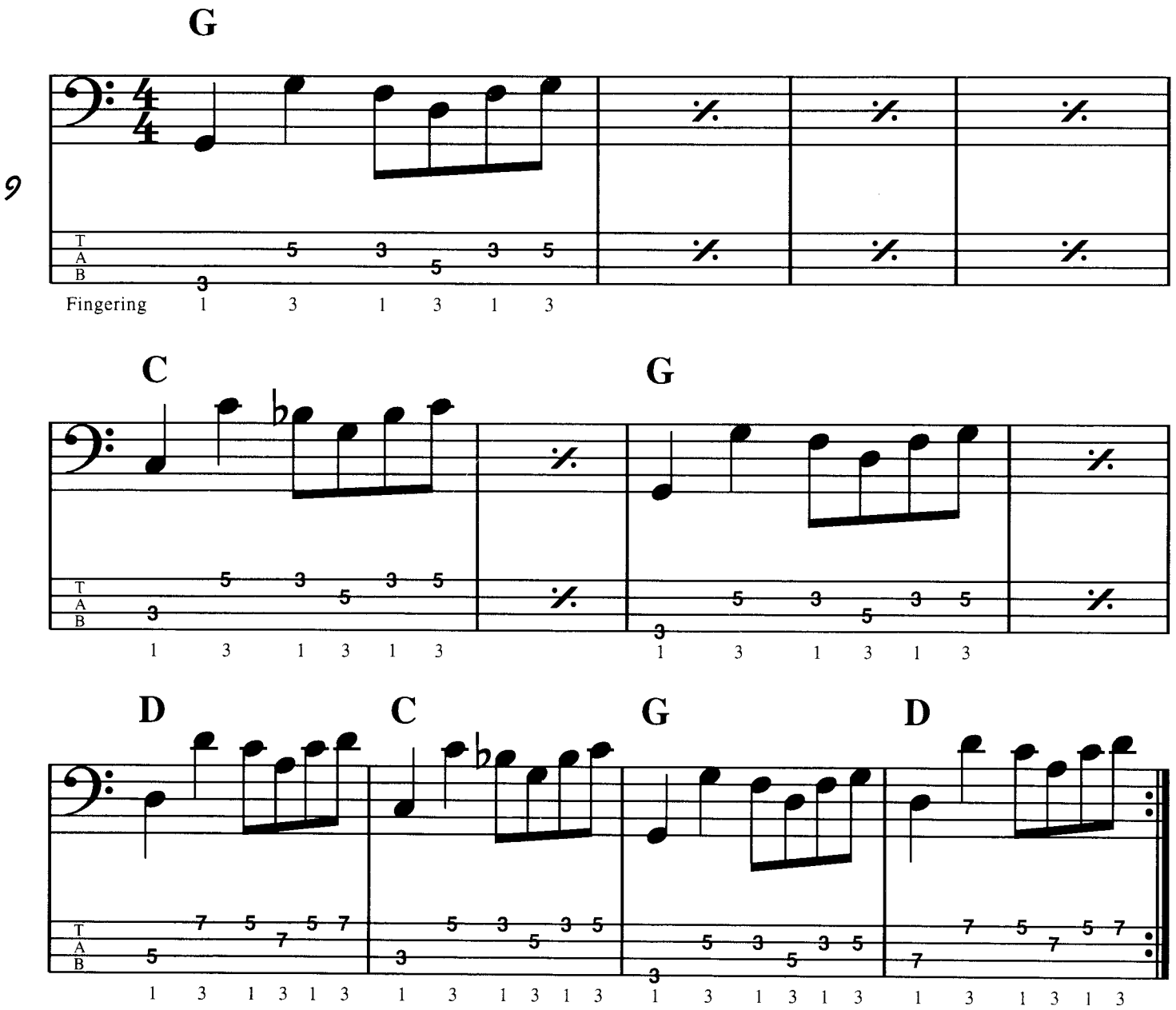




Example 8 uses a riff in the key of G combining quarter notes and eighth notes. Note that this time the notes are not played in the open position. Memorize this riff so it can be played in different positions on the fretboard for each chord.

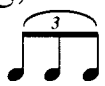


Example 9 is the application of the previous riff to a 12 bar blues progression in G.

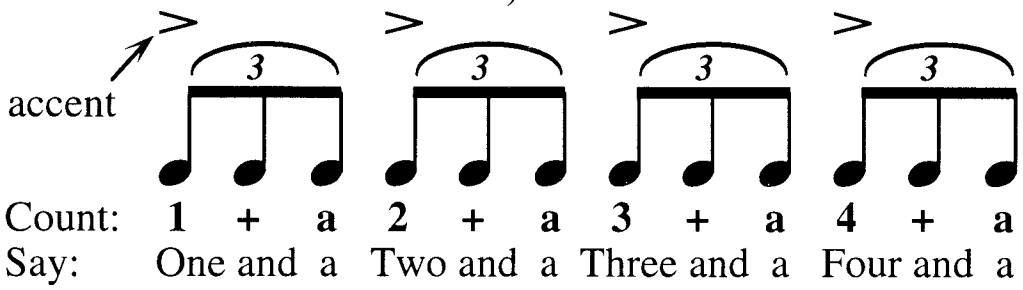


For more Blues bass licks incorporating quarter and eighth notes see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

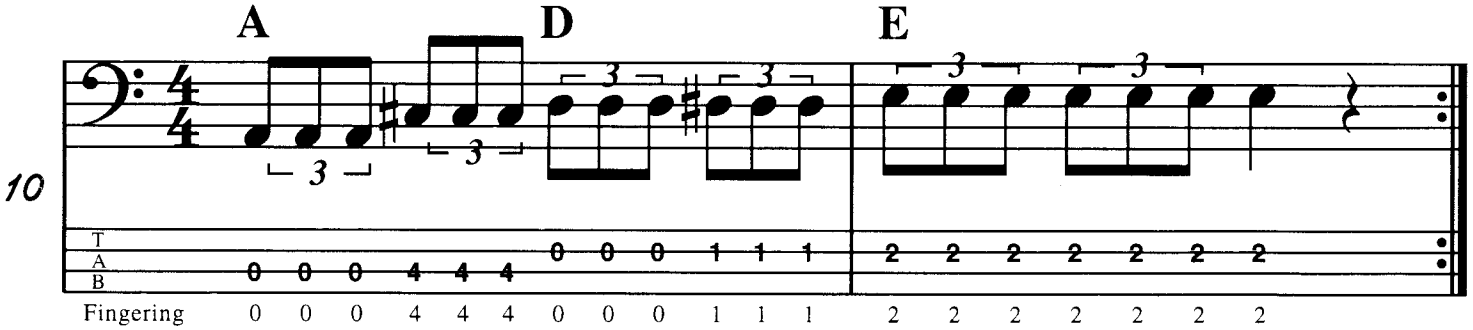
Eighth Note Triplets

In triplet timing, three evenly spaced notes are played in each beat (indicated thus ),

They should be played with an accent on the first note of each group of three (i.e. accent each note that falls "on" the beat).

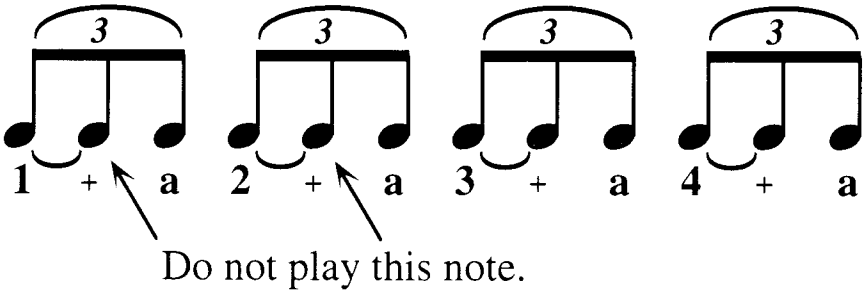


The following example uses triplets.

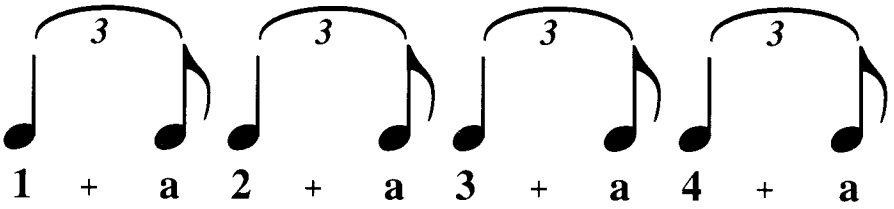


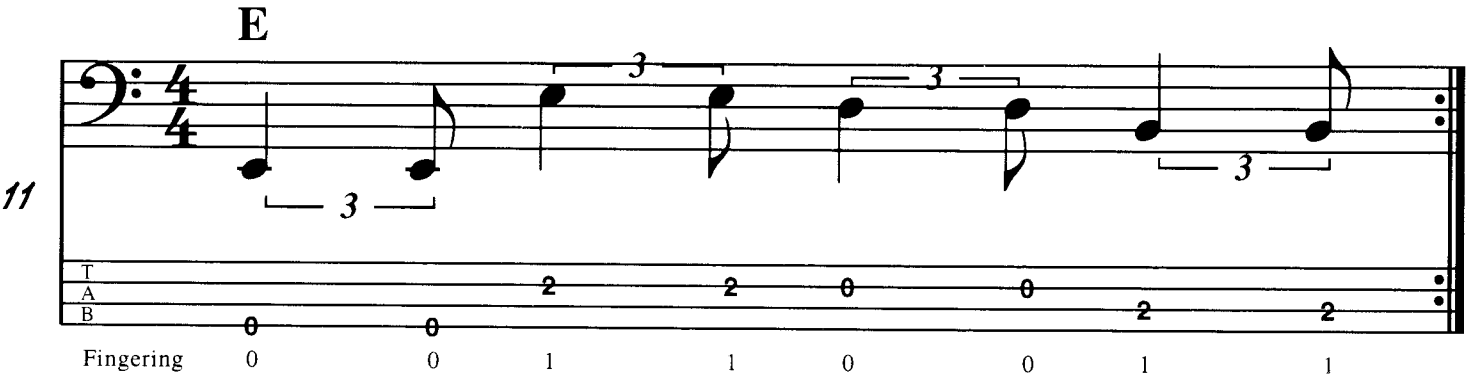
Shuffle Rhythm

The shuffle rhythm is a very common variation based upon the triplet. It is created by not playing the middle note of the triplet as indicated by the tie.

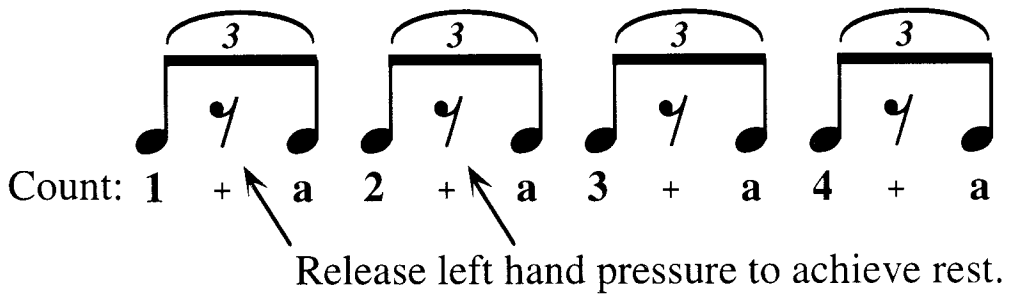


This can also be written as:

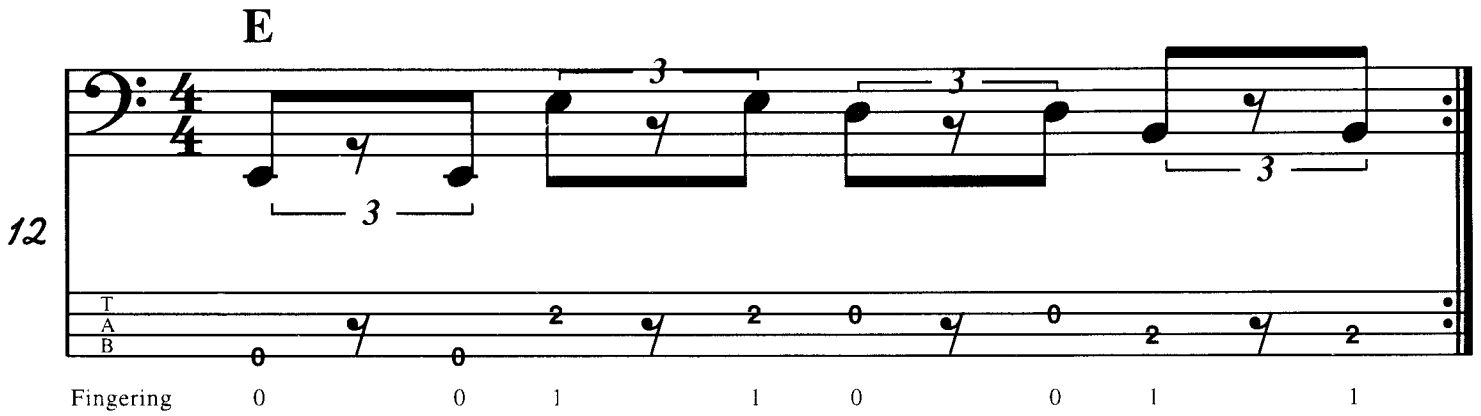




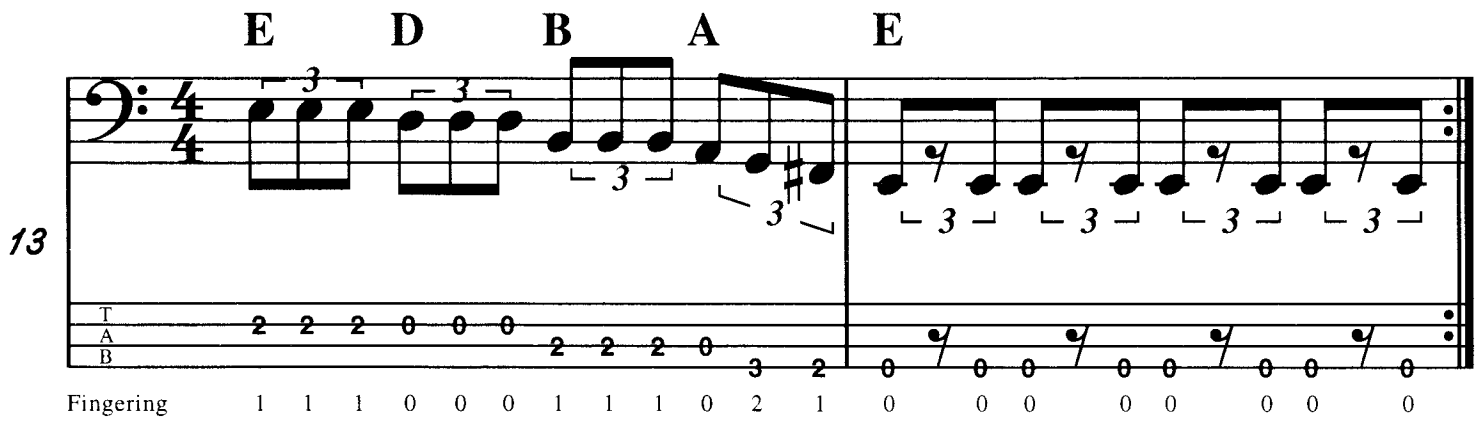
A staccato feel can be achieved by playing a rest on the middle count of the triplet, as such:

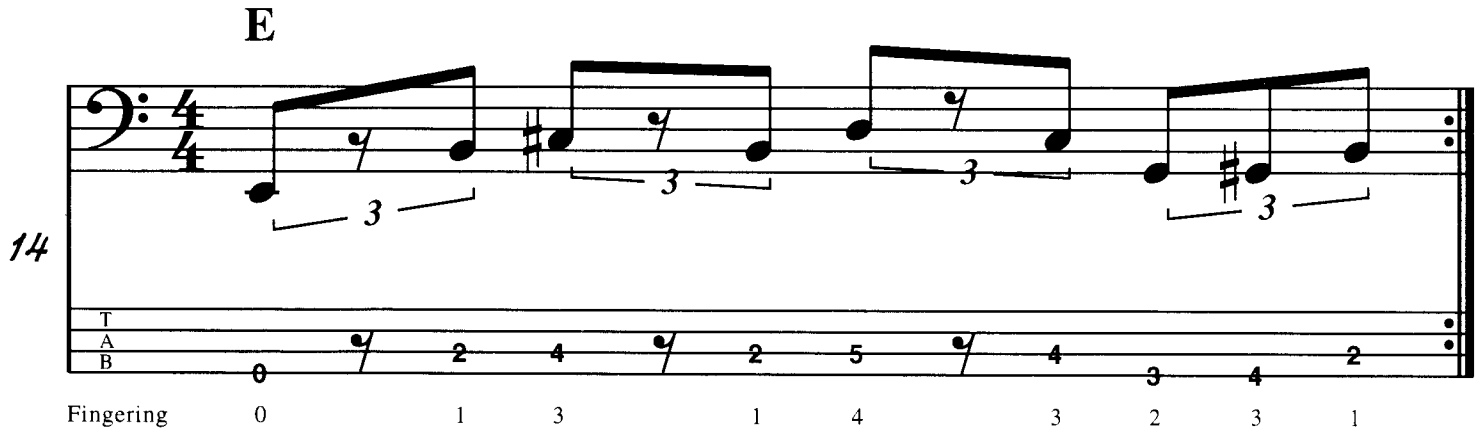


The following example uses the staccato feel of the shuffle rhythm.

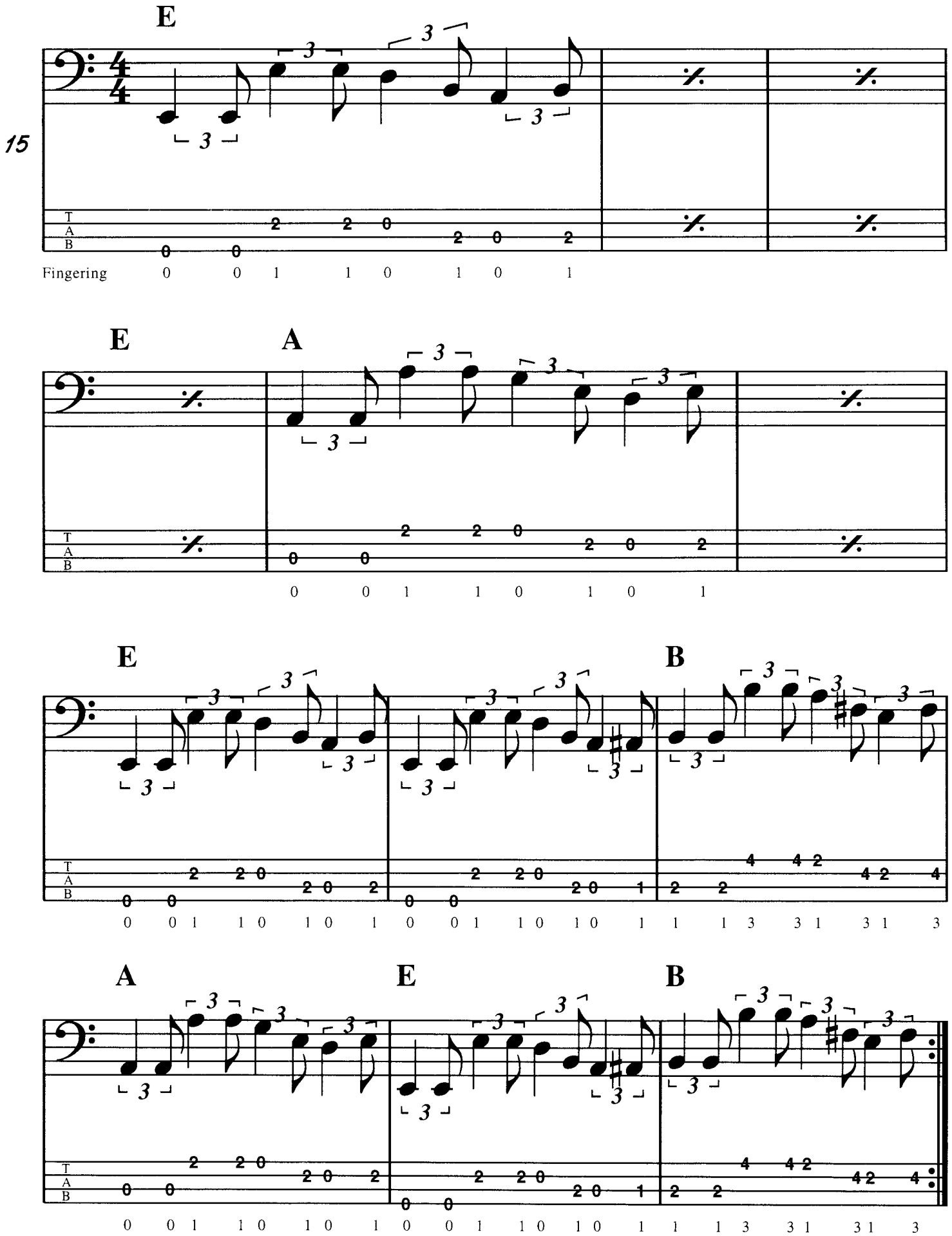


Examples 13 and 14 combine triplets with the staccato feel.





Example 15 uses the shuffle rhythm over the 12 bar progression in the key of E



For more Blues bass licks incorporating triplets and the shuffle rhythm see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks****.*

SECTION II

Scales, Runs and Progressions.

John Lee Hooker

The Major Scale

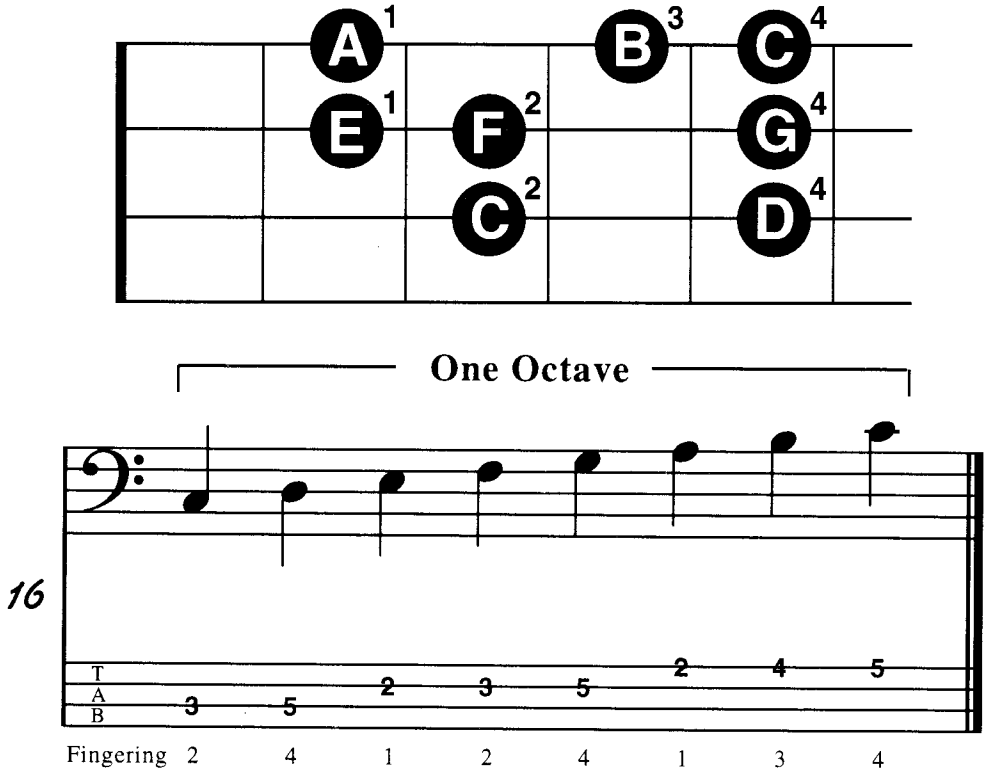
The major scale is a series of eight notes in alphabetical order that has the familiar sound

Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do

The name of the major scale is taken from its first note (root note).

The finger pattern for the Major Scale is shown below. The example given is the C major scale.

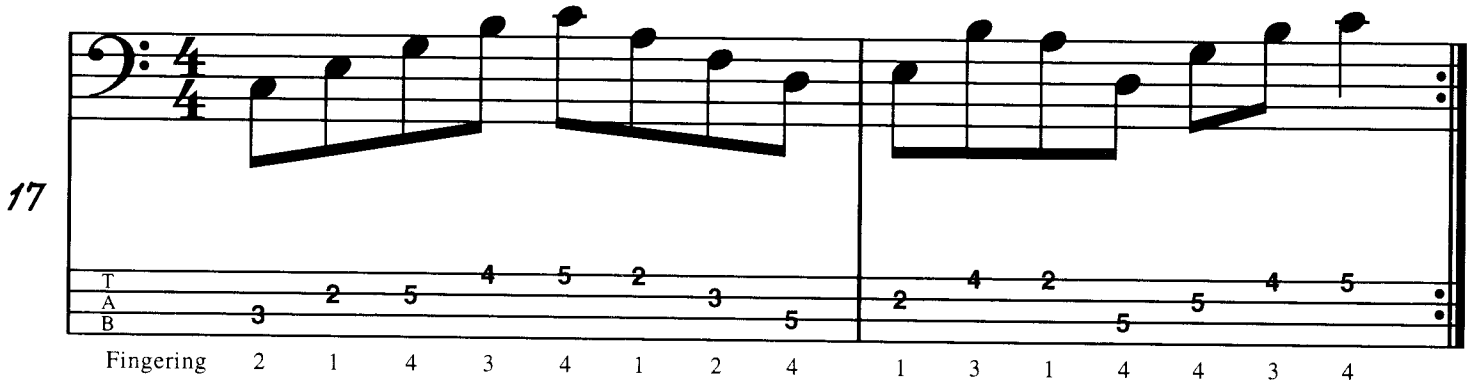
C Major Scale Finger Pattern



The Octave

An octave is the range of eight notes of a major scale. The first note and the last note of a major scale always have the same name. In the C major scale the distance from the lowest C to the C note above it is one octave (eight notes).

Example 17 uses all the notes of the C major scale.

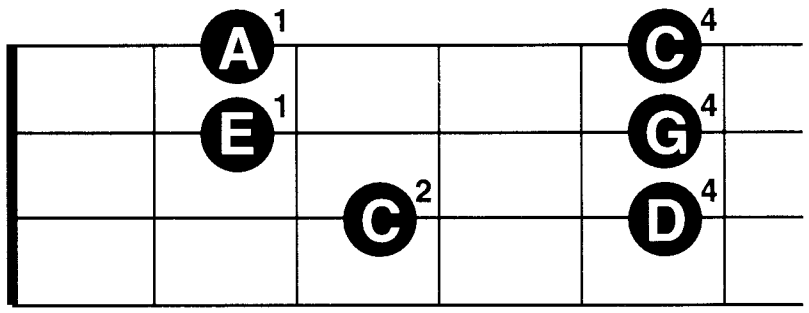


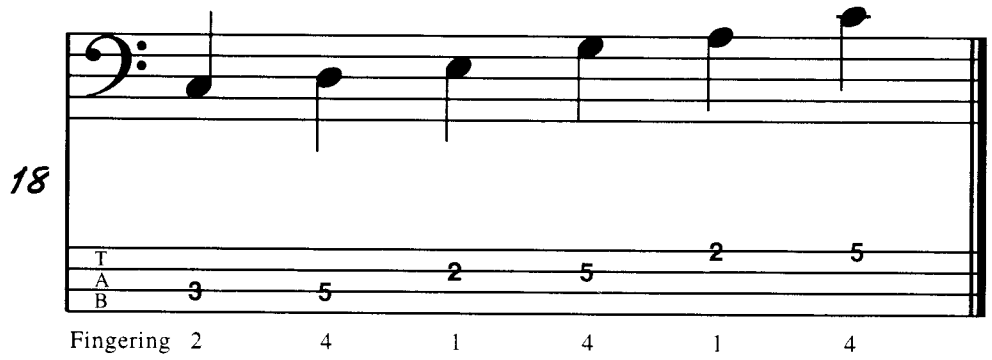
Major Pentatonic Scale

The Major Pentatonic scale consists of the same notes as the Major scale except the 4th and 7th notes are omitted.

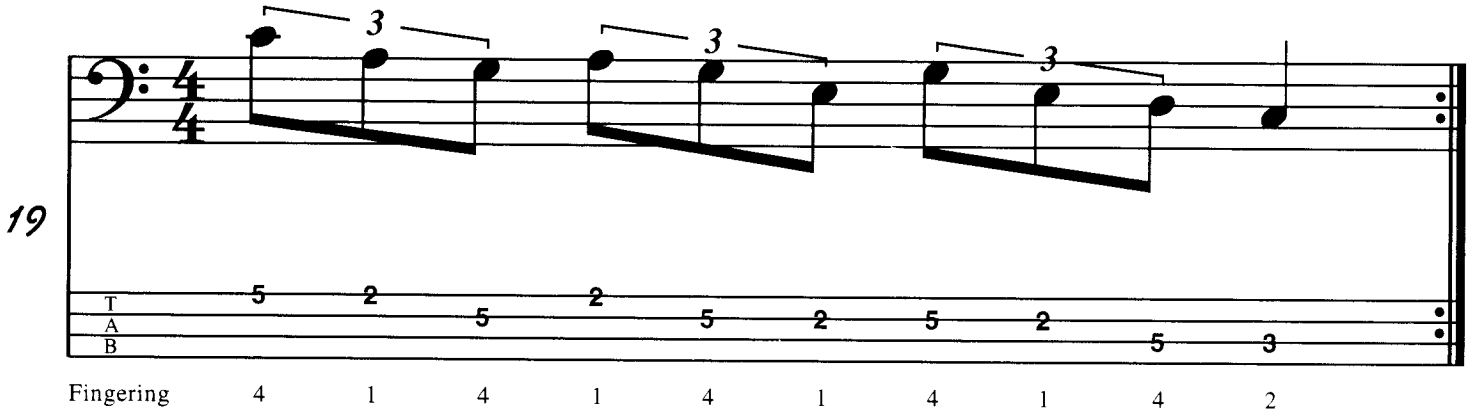
Memorize the finger pattern of the Major and Major Pentatonic scales as they are both commonly used in Blues music.

C Major Scale Pentatonic Finger Pattern

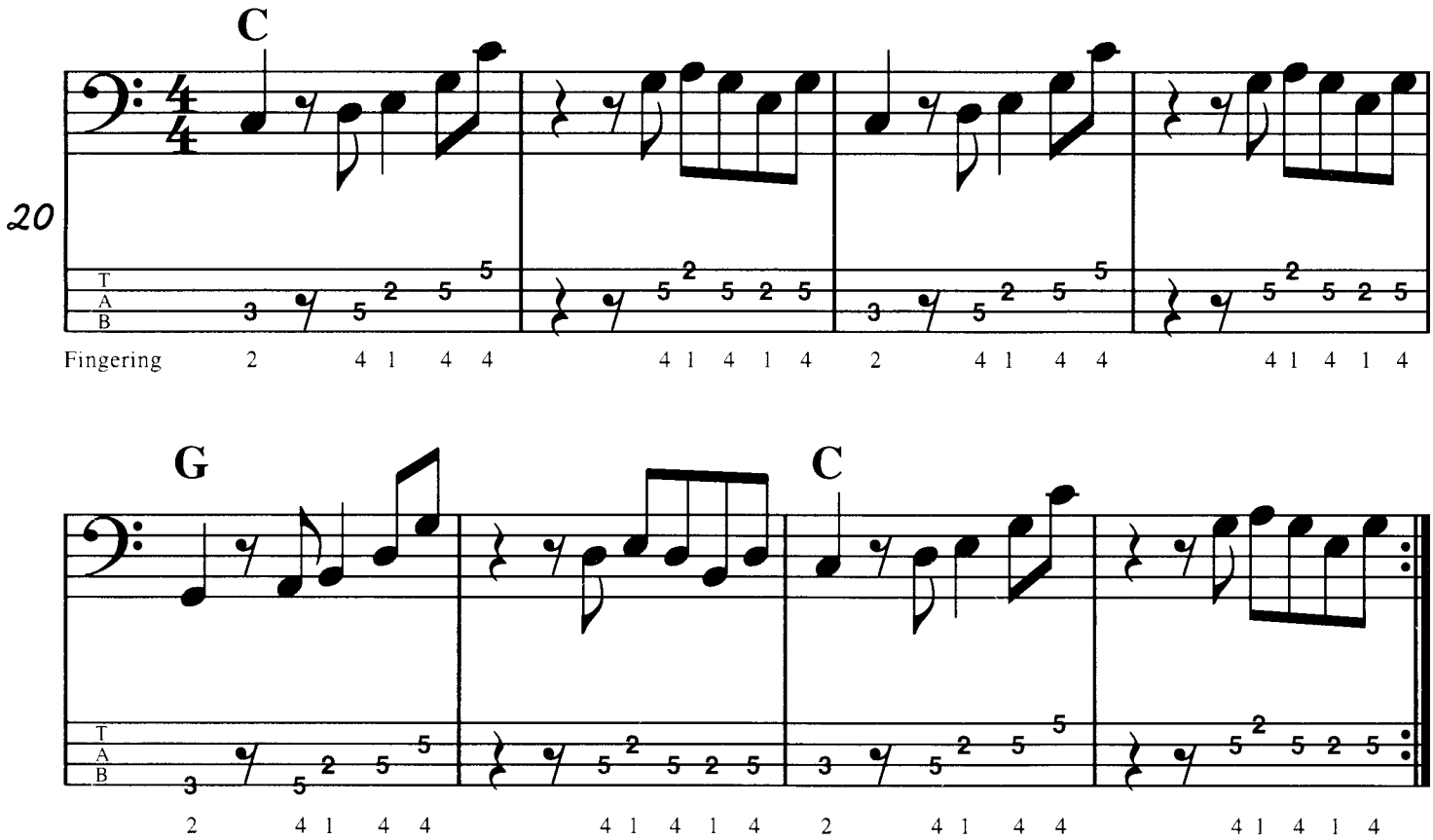




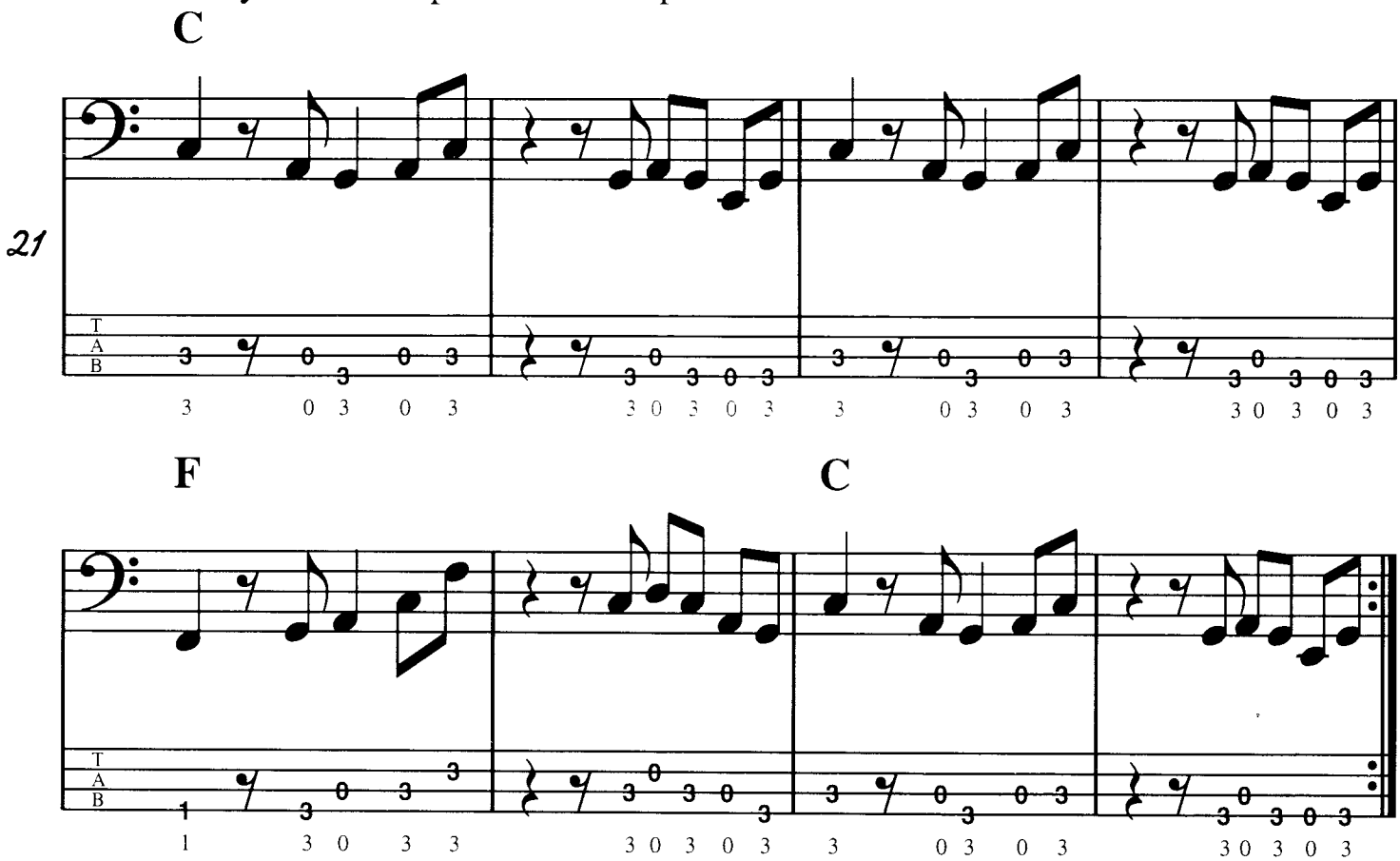
Example 19 is a descending Blues bass run using all the notes of the C major pentatonic scale.



Example 20 is based upon the Major Pentatonic scale using a two bar pattern throughout the whole progression. A basic 8 bar Blues progression is introduced.



Example 21 is another variation of an eight bar Blues progression. The bassline uses the same rhythm as the previous example.



For more Blues bass licks incorporating major pentatonic scales see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

Stop Time Blues Rhythm

Example 22 introduces the stop time Blues rhythm. This rhythm has a broken up feel, i.e. the bassline is made up of short phrases divided by a short break or rest. Another variation of an 8 bar Blues progression is also applied. Note that the bassline does not begin on the the first beat of the bar. This is commonly known as a **lead-in**.

22

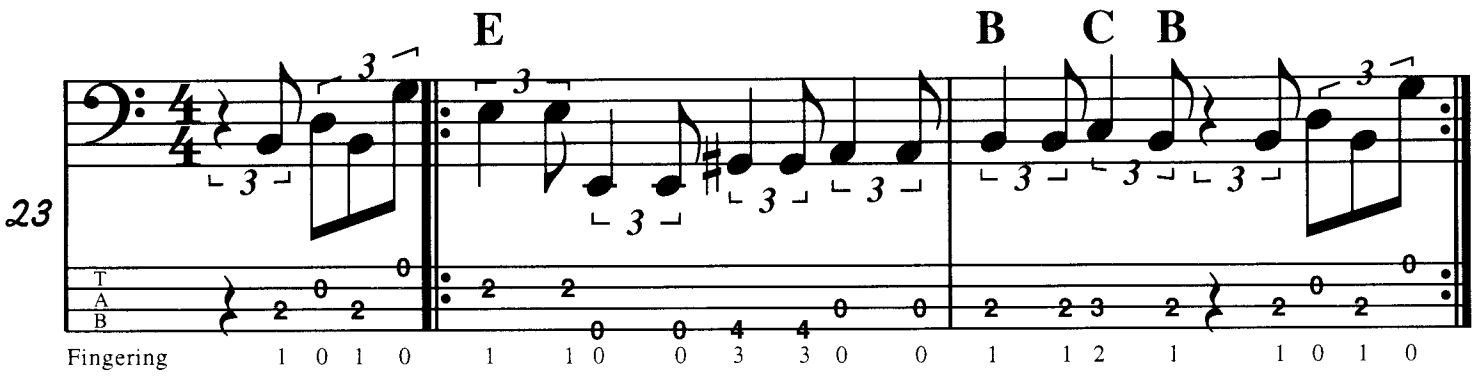
C7 F7 C7 G7 F7 C7 G7

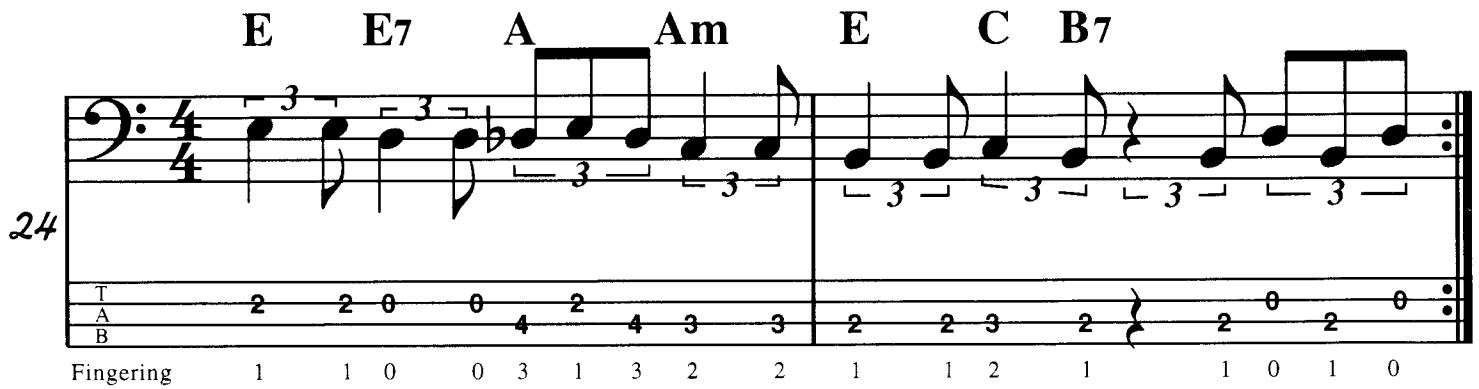
Fingering 3 1 3 1 3 3 1 3 1 3 3 1 3 1

For more Blues bass licks incorporating stop time rhythm see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks****.*

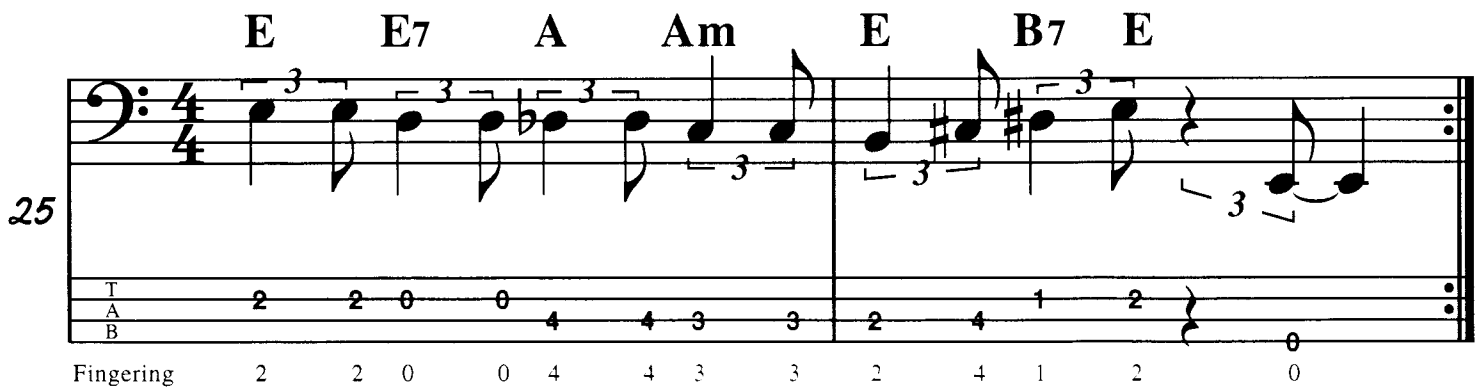
Blues Intros and Endings

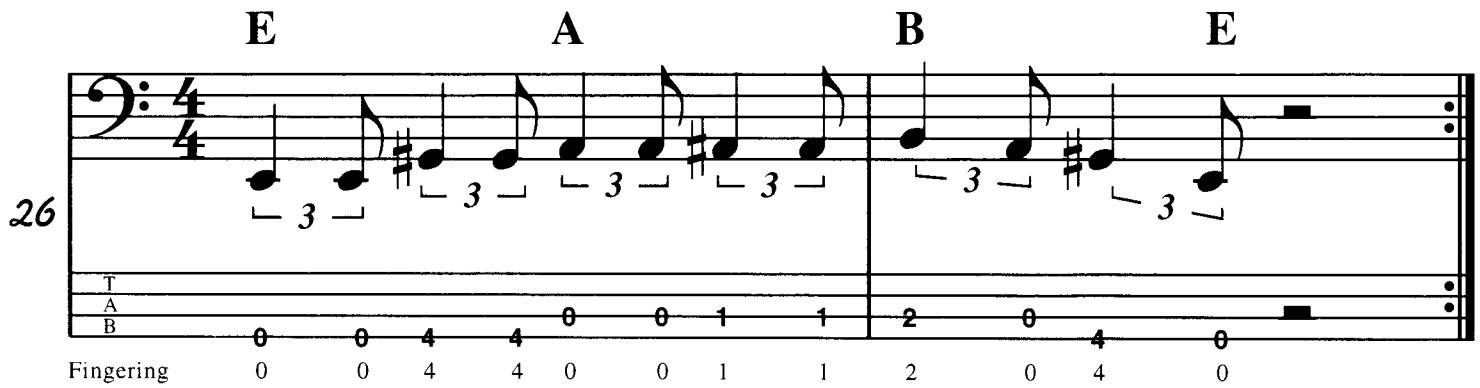
Example 23 uses a stop time rhythm similar to the previous example.





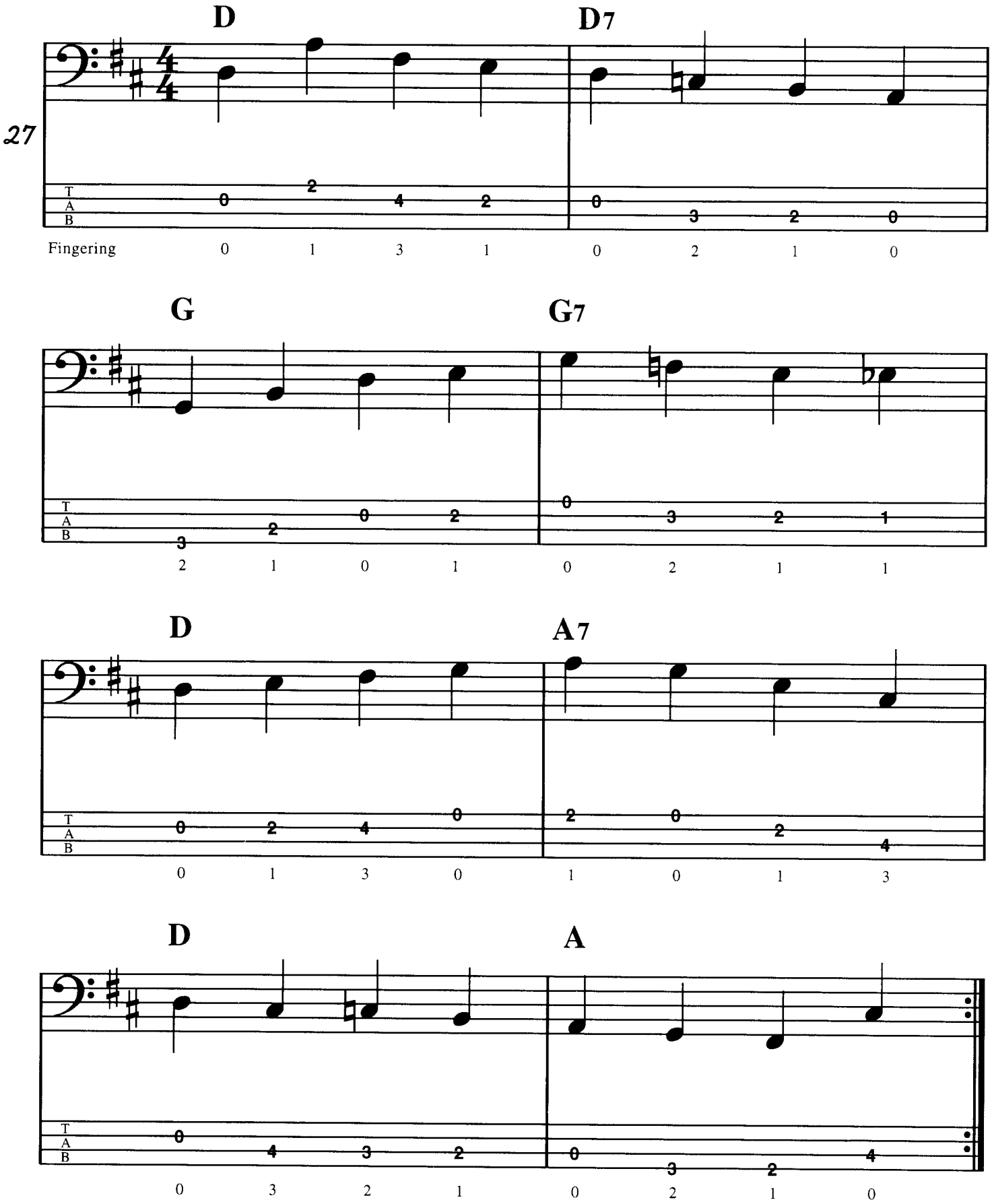
Example 25 introduces **syncopation**, sometimes refered to as off-beat playing. Syncopation is the accenting of a beat which is normally unaccented. It normally occurs when accents are played on one or more of the up beats (the beats in-between the numbered beats) in the bar, i.e, the "and" count.



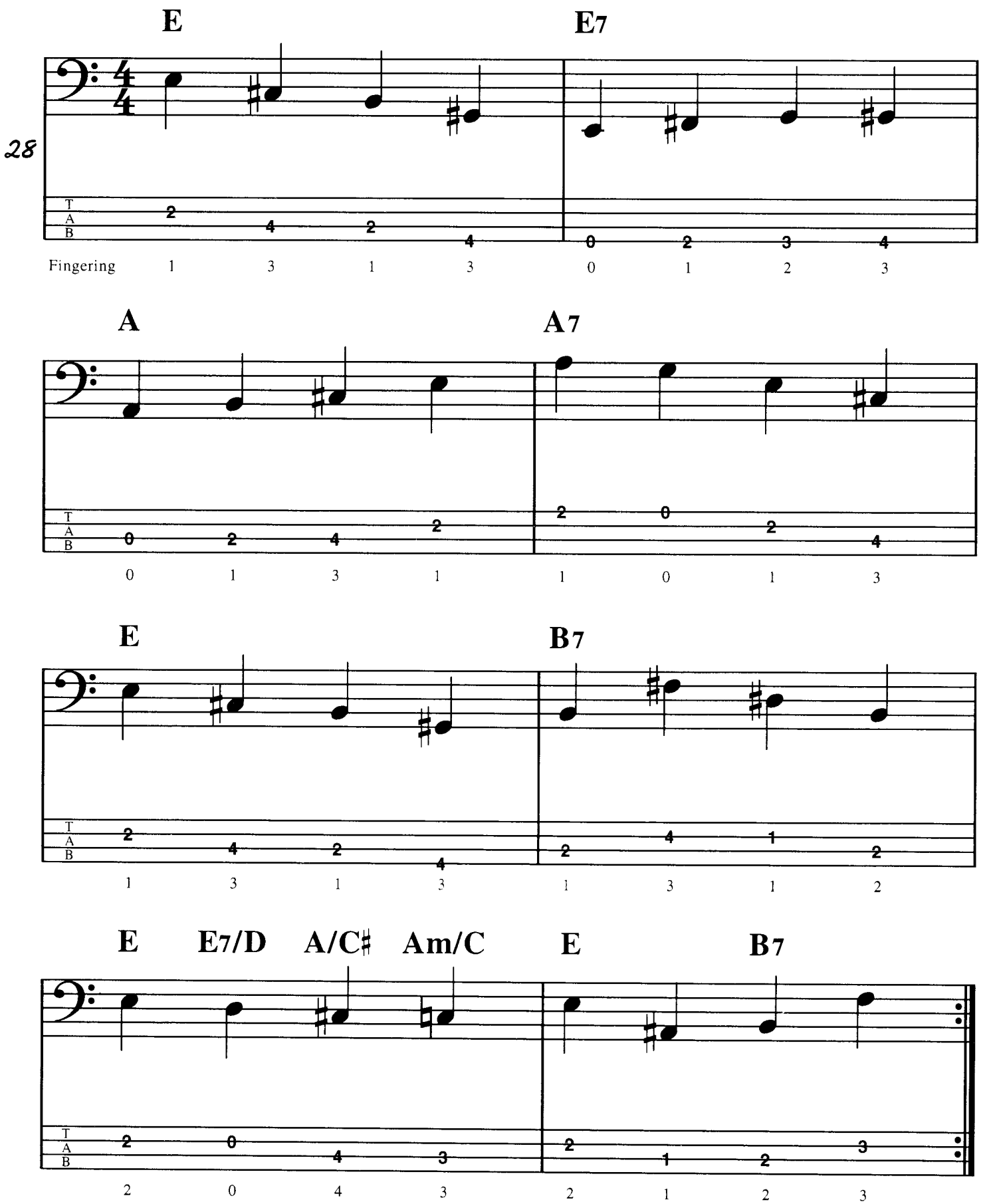


Walking Bass

The next example uses quarter notes only throughout the entire progression. The notes move in a gradually ascending and descending fashion. This type of bass playing is often refered to as walking or swing bass. Another variation of an eight bar Blues progression is used.

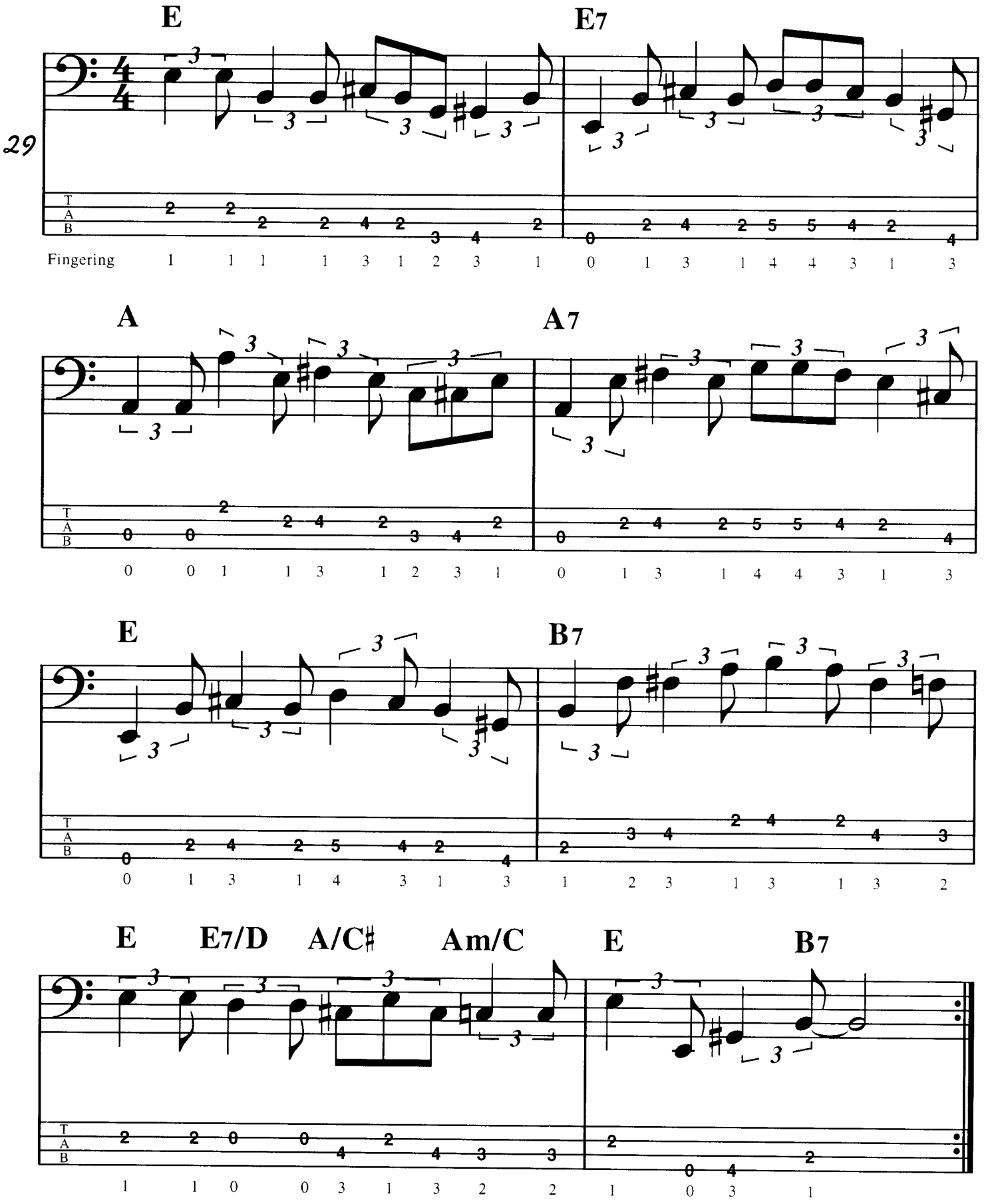


Example 28 uses a similar eight bar Blues progression to the previous example. This time the key of E is used with a few additional chords. Once again the walking bass is the feature.



For more Blues bass licks incorporating walking basslines see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

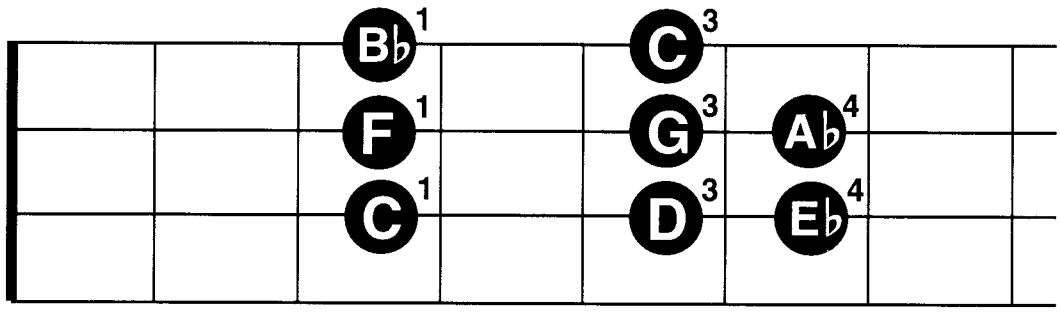
Now try applying a walking bassline to the previous chord progression. This line is more "busy". You can combine the types of basslines from both examples to create more variations. This is often necessary when the progression is repeated several times, helping to provide a more interesting bassline.

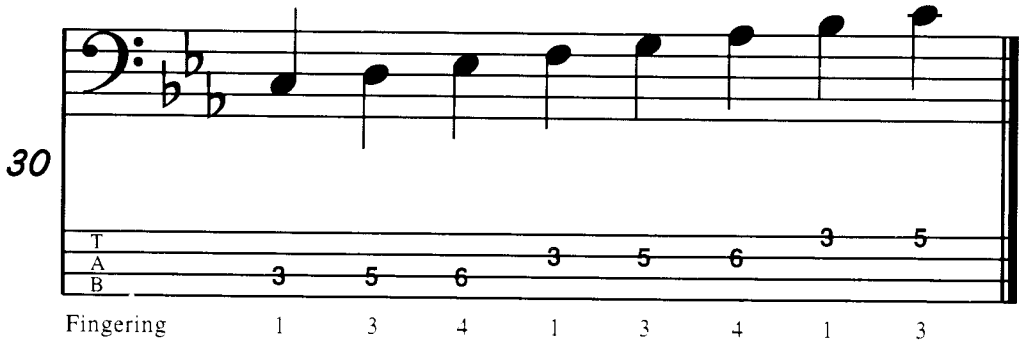


The Minor Scale

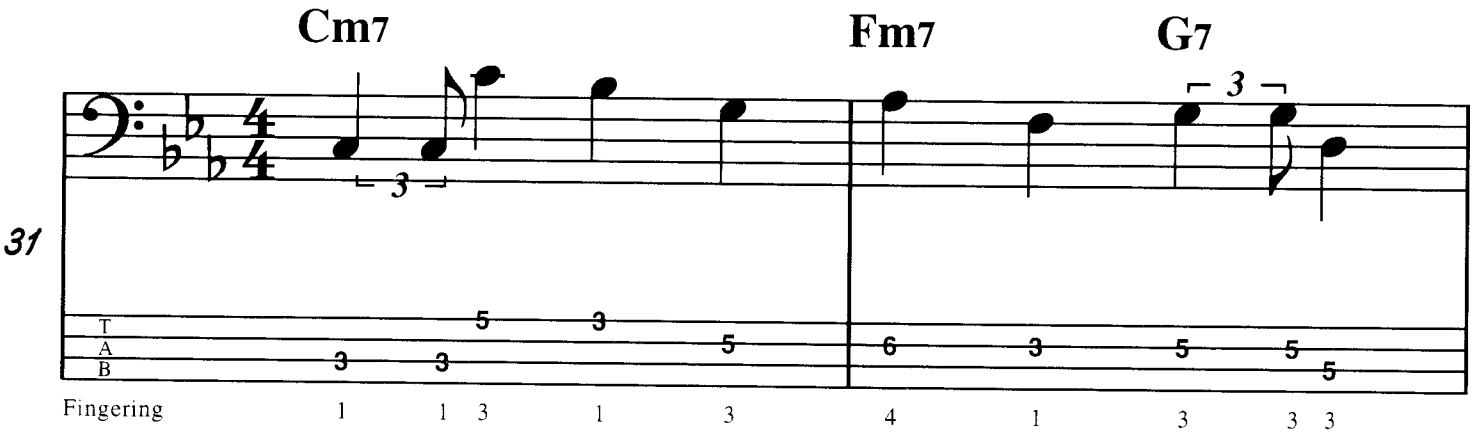
The **minor** scale consists of the same notes as the Major Scale (see page 24) except the 3rd, 6th and 7th notes of the scale are flattened.

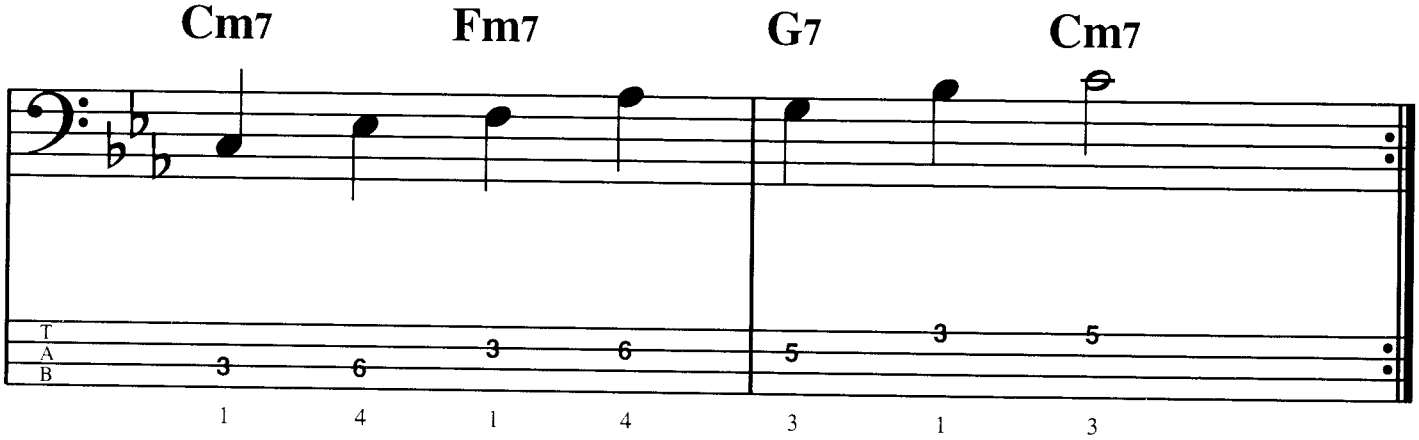
C Minor Scale Finger Pattern





Example 31 uses the notes of the C minor scale.

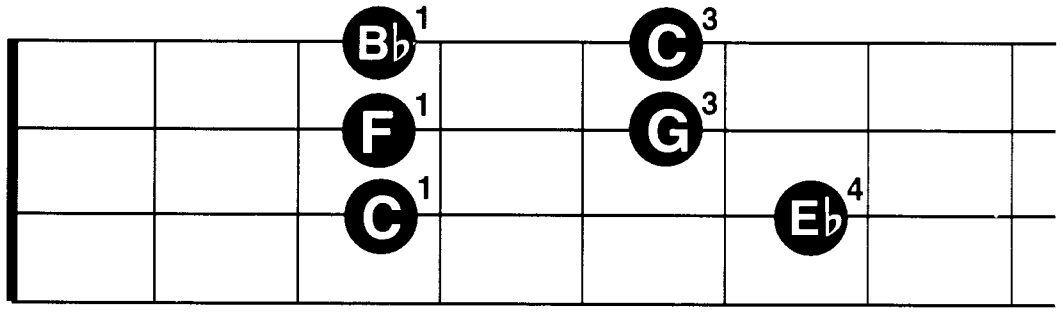


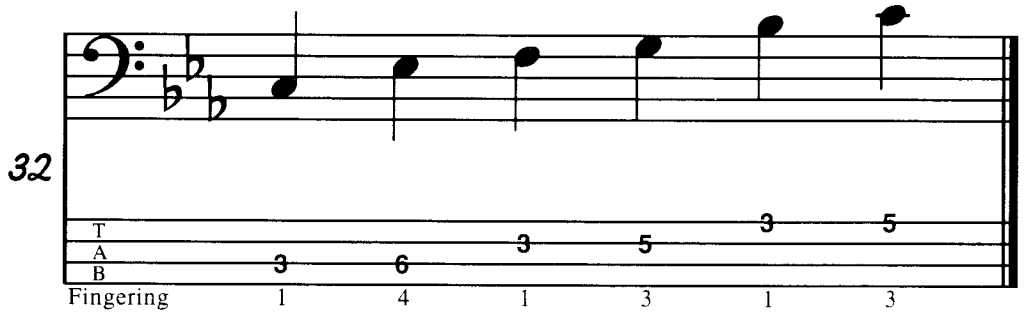


Minor Pentatonic Scale

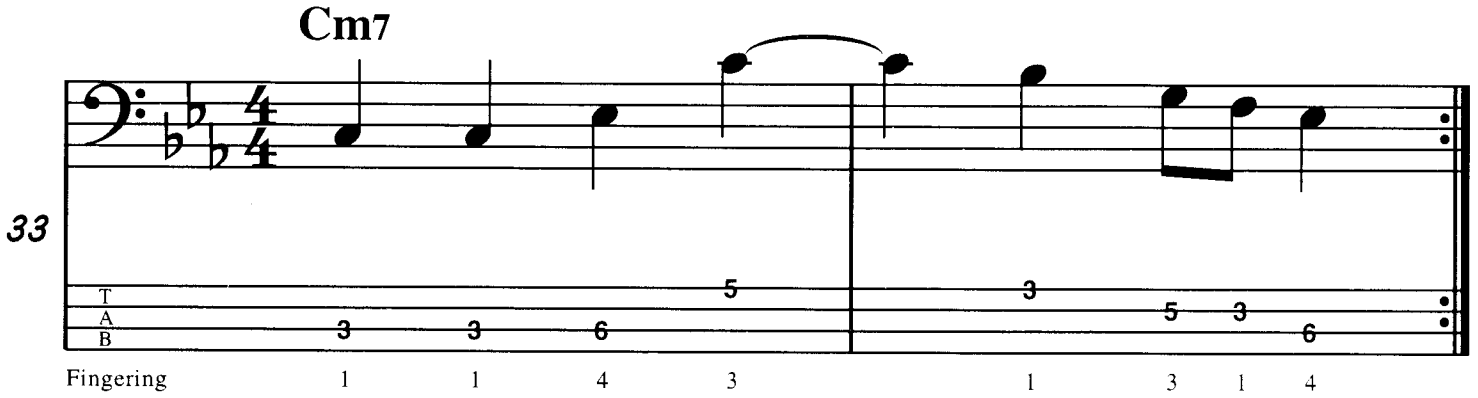
The Minor Pentatonic scale consists of the same notes as the Minor scale except the 2nd and 6th notes are omitted.

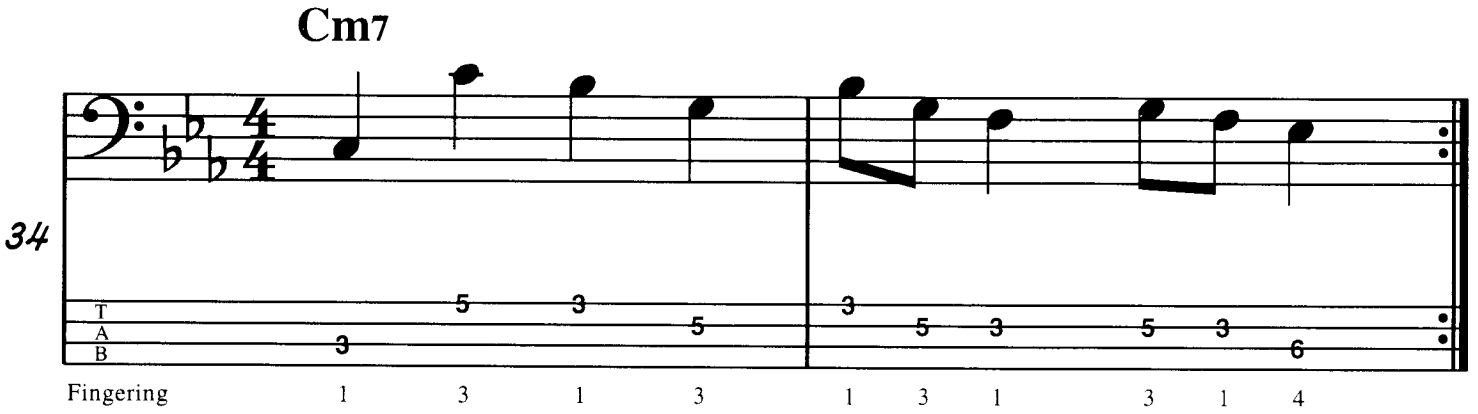
C Minor Scale Pentatonic Finger Pattern





Examples 33 and 34 use notes from the C minor pentatonic scale.

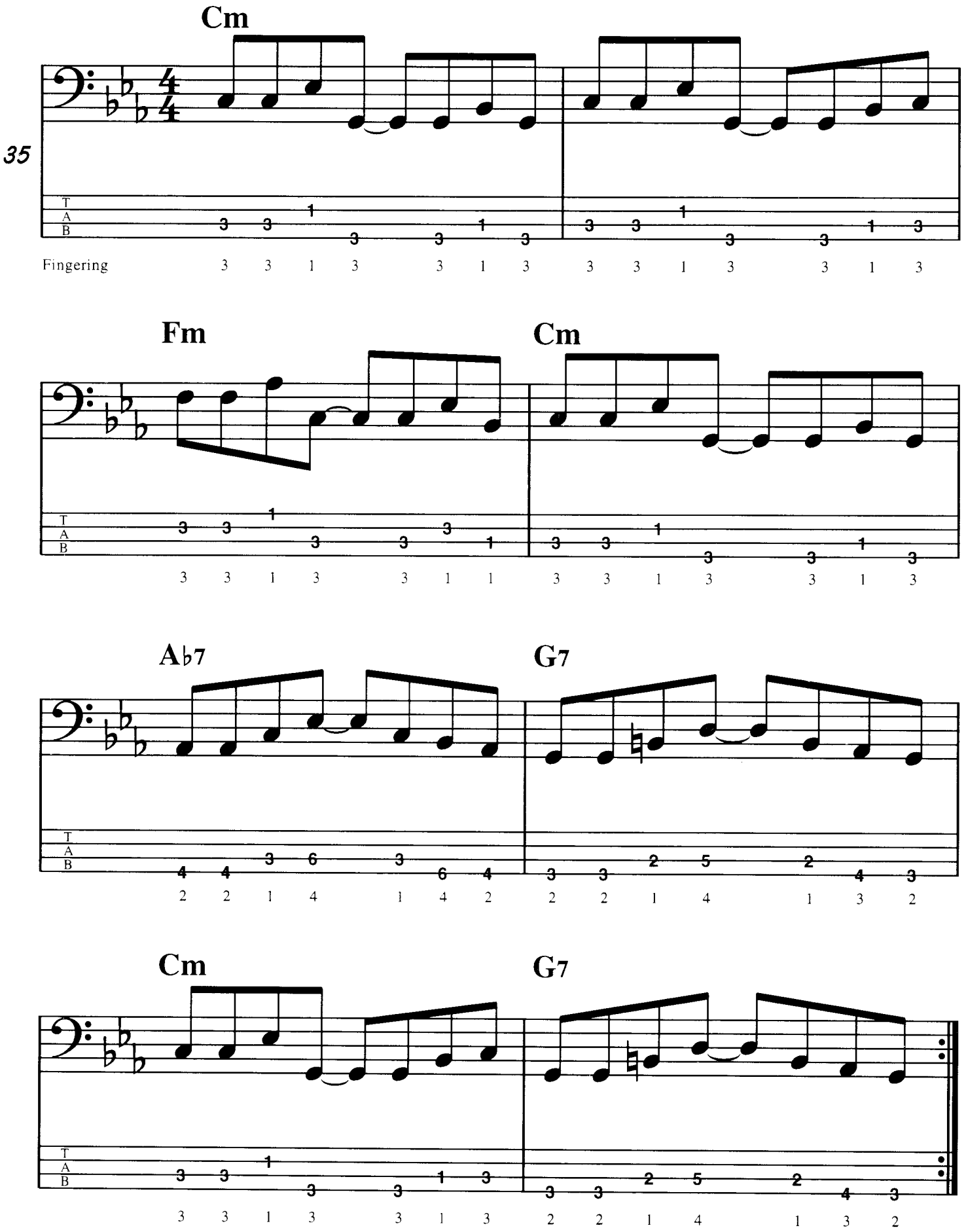




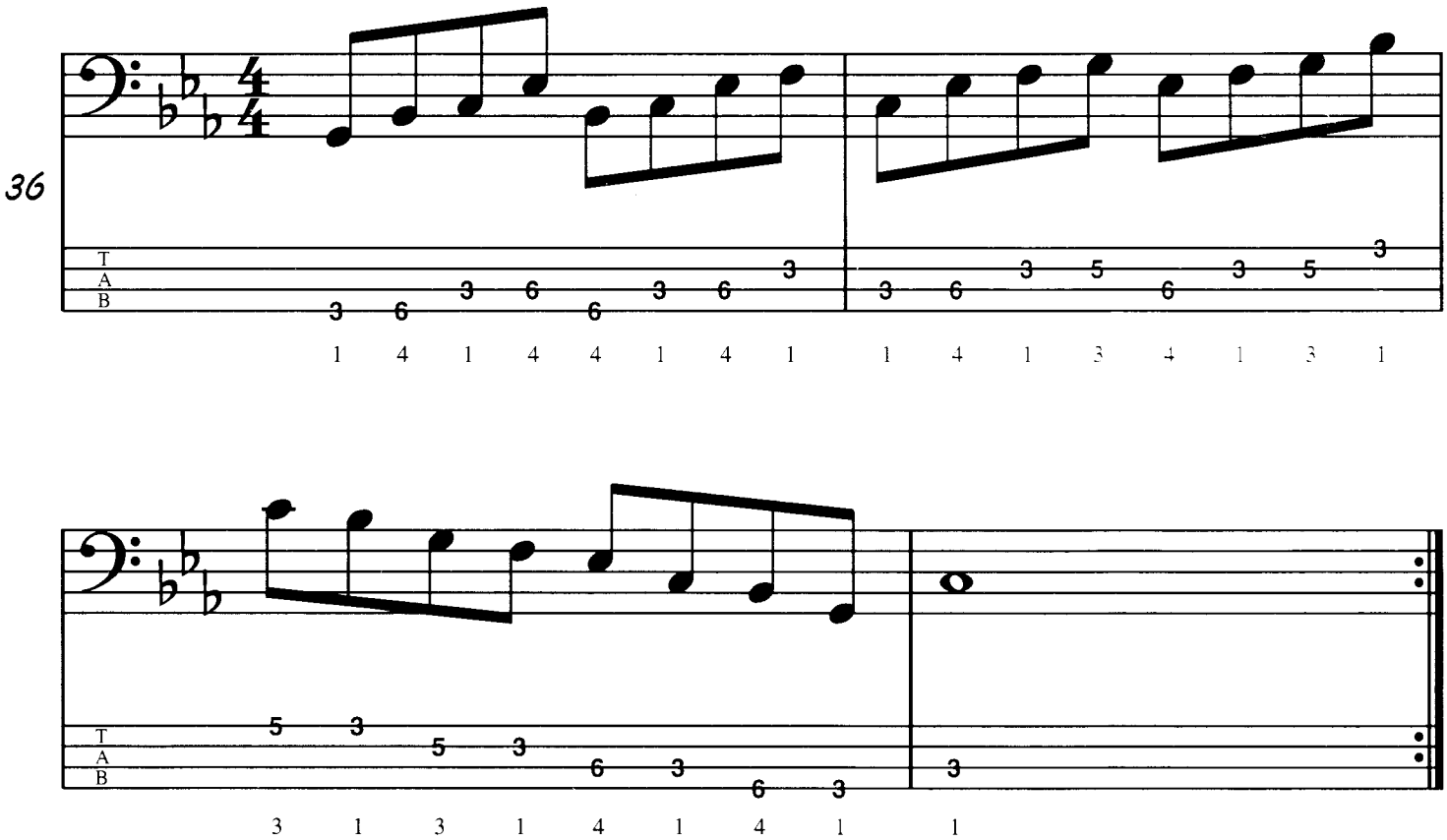
Memorize the finger pattern of the Minor and Minor Pentatonic scales as they are both commonly used in Blues music.

Minor Blues Progressions

Example 35 is an 8 bar minor blues progression in the key of C minor. This time a distinctive Blues-Rock feel is used.



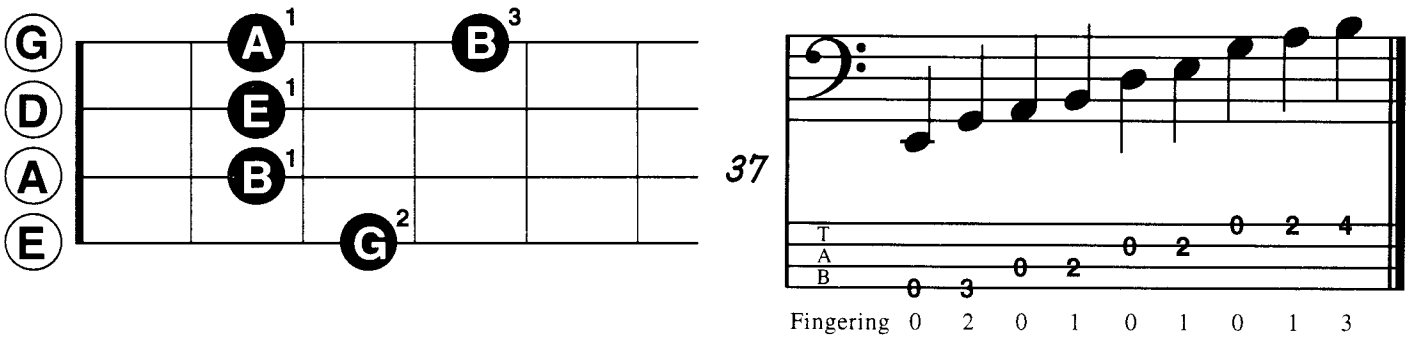
Example 36 is a Blues bass run using the notes of the C minor pentatonic scale.



B.B. King

E Minor Pentatonic Scale Pattern 1

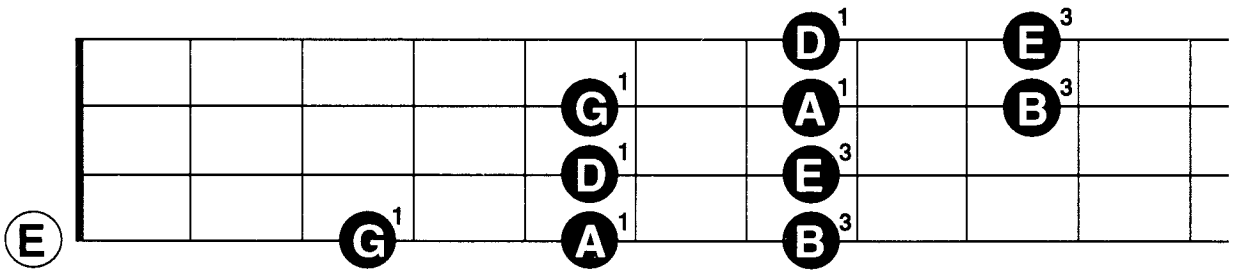
Pattern 1 is played in the open position (the first four frets). This pattern ranges from the low E string to the fourth fret of the first string, covering a total of one and a half octaves.



E Minor Pentatonic Scale Pattern 2

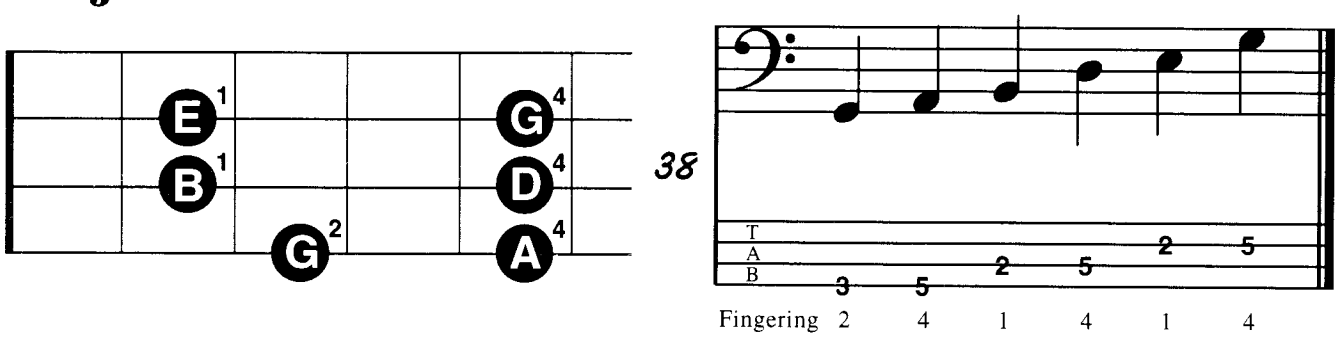
Pattern 2 is played using almost all fretted notes. This time two octaves are covered.

There are several options and fingerings for this scale using exactly the same notes but on different locations on the fretboard.



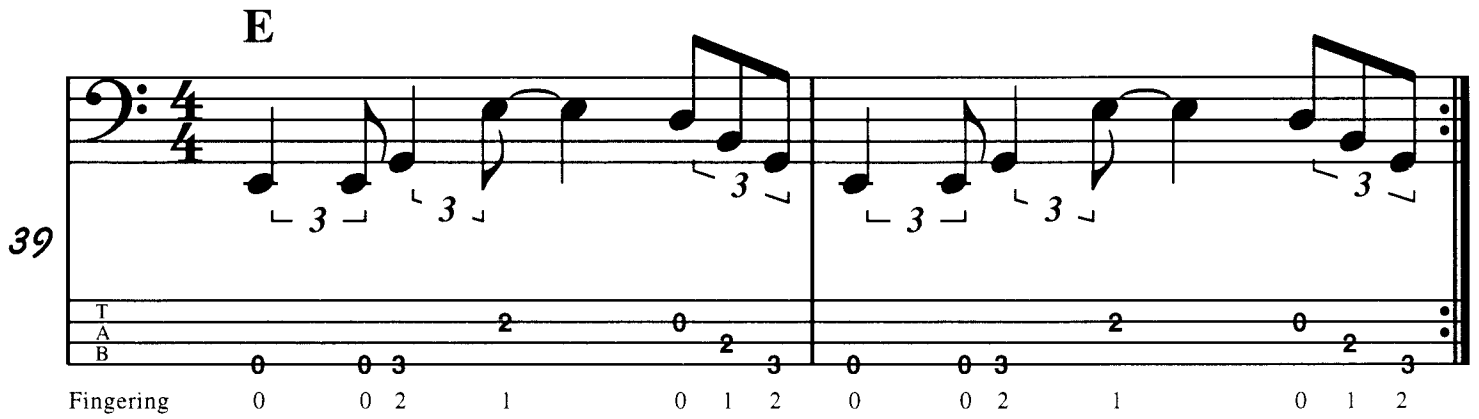
It is also important to note that the E minor pentatonic scale shares the same notes as the G major pentatonic scale, each scale beginning with a different note. Study the following diagram.

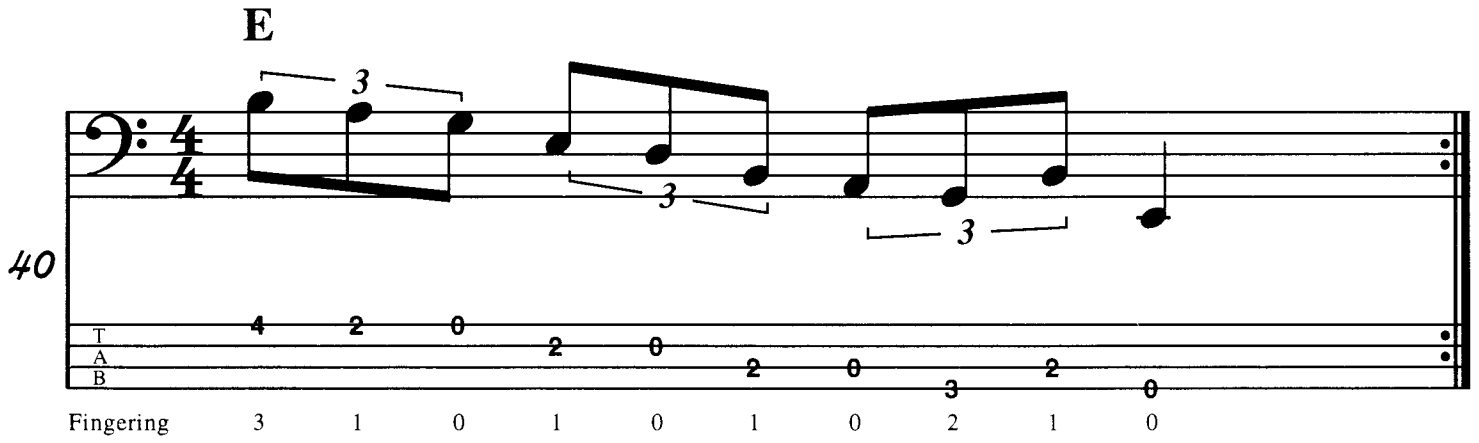
G Major Pentatonic Scale



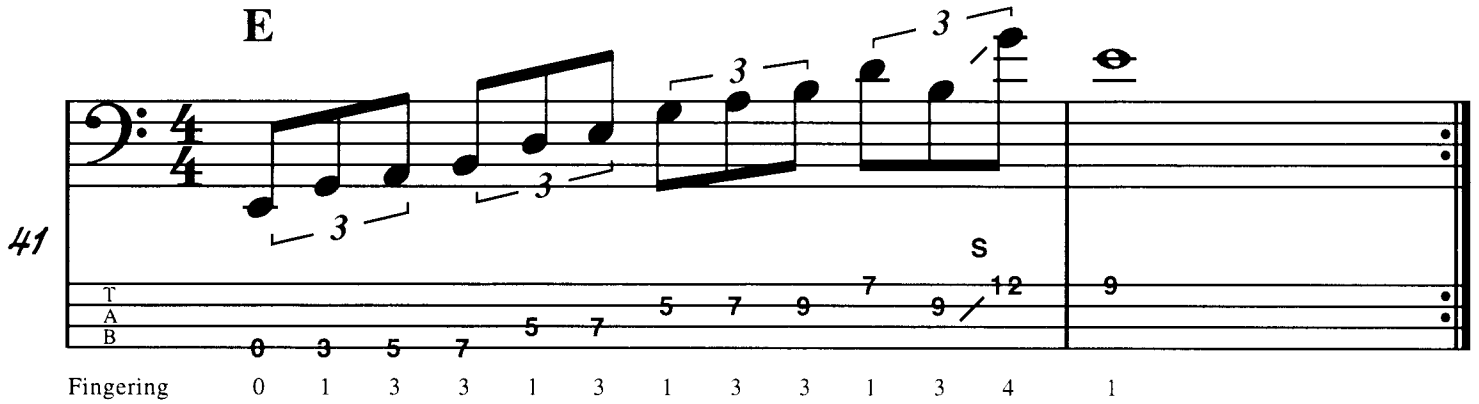
Memorize the patterns illustrated on this page as they are the basis of many basslines, runs, fills, licks and solos. Experiment with them to create your own ideas.

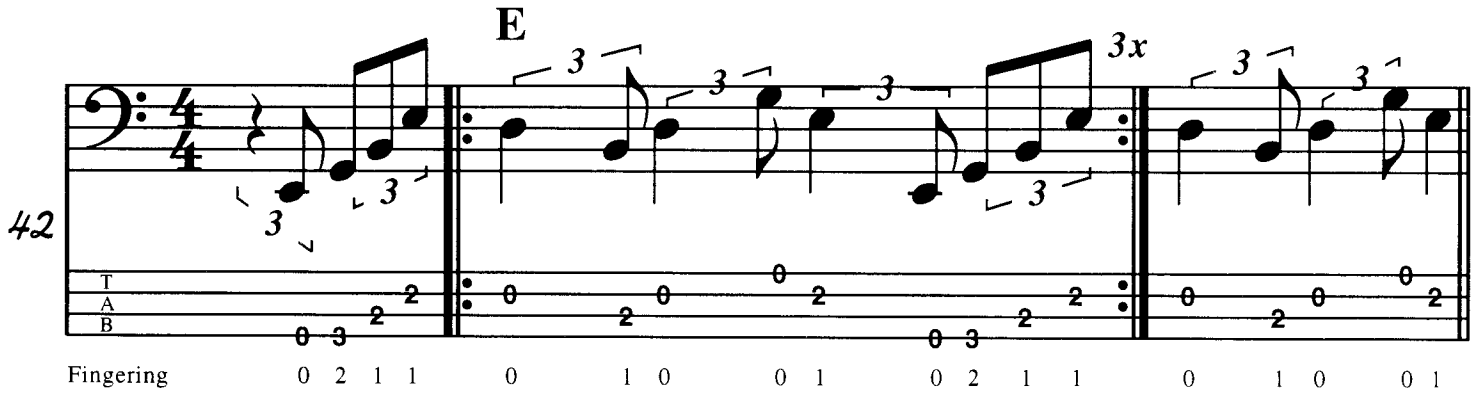
Examples 39 - 42 are played within the E minor Pentatonic scale.





Example 41 has a range of more than two octaves. A slide is also introduced in the first bar. Slide to the 12th fret after playing a lower note on that string, without releasing the pressure of the fretting finger against the fretboard.

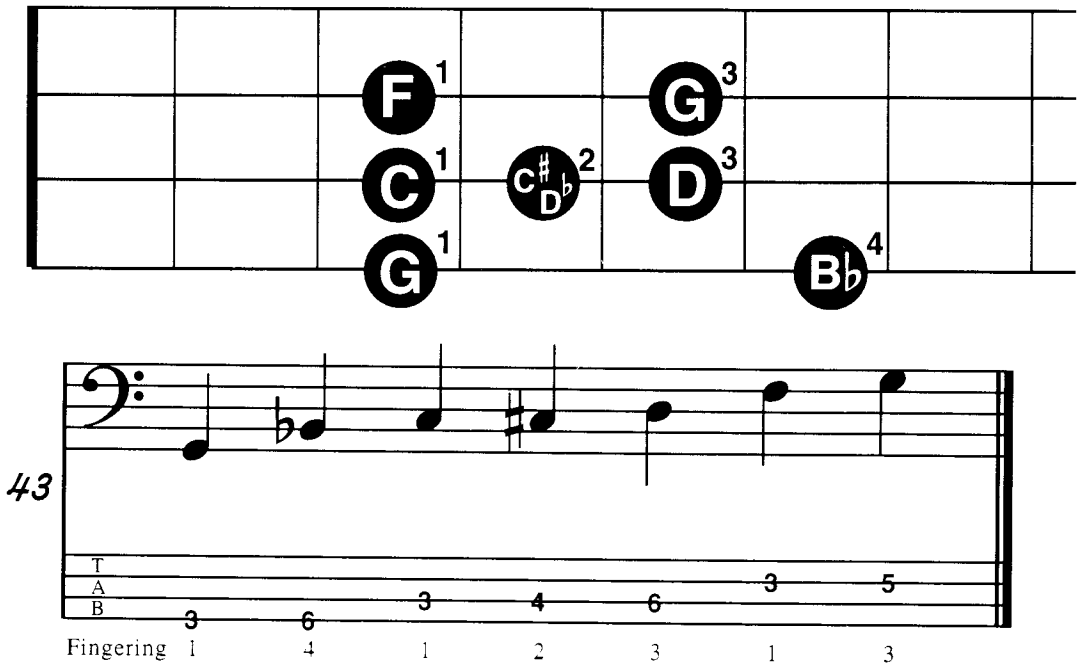




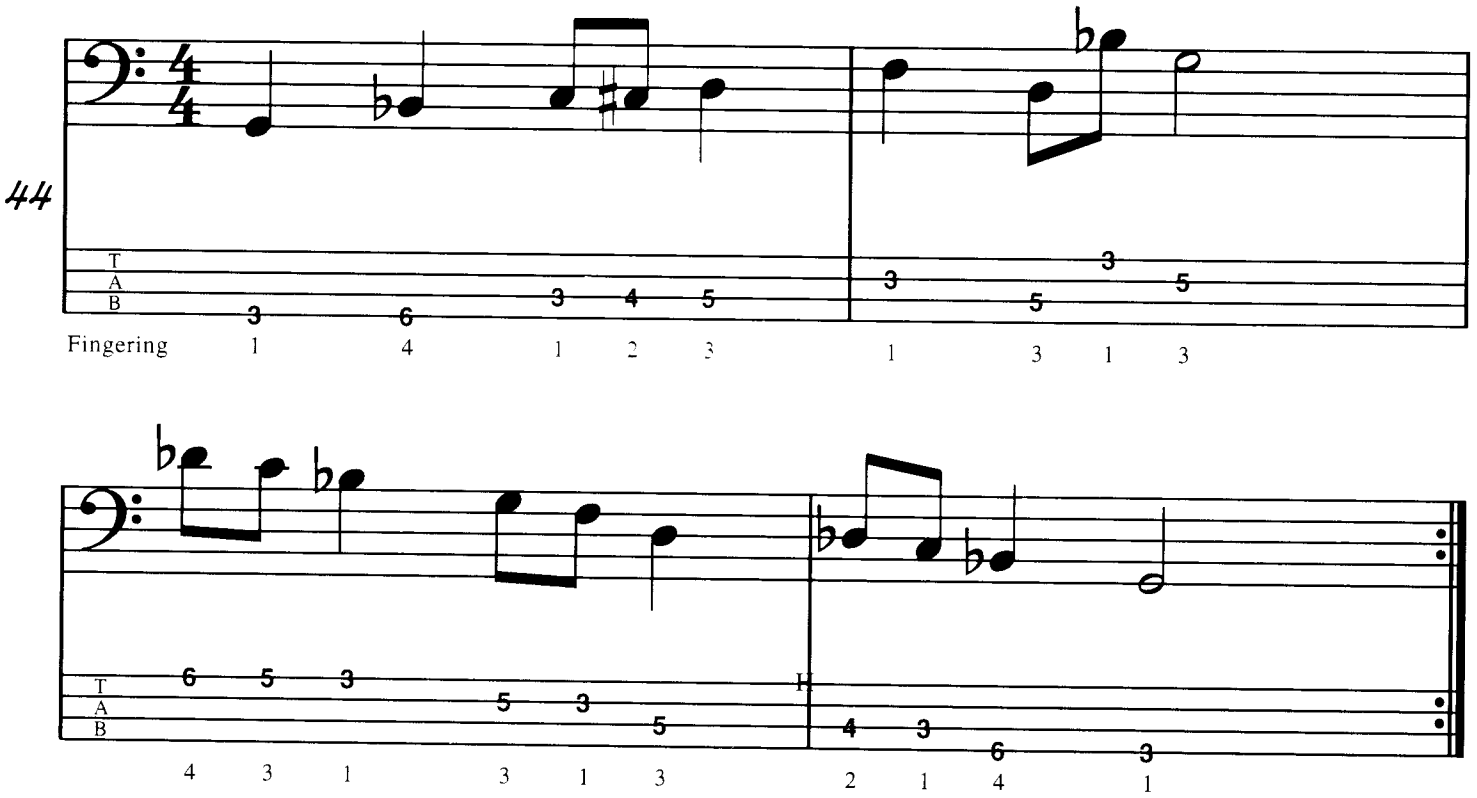
The Blues Scale

The **Blues** scale consists of the same notes as the minor pentatonic scale (see page 33) with one extra note i.e, the flat fifth note of the major scale. The example below is the G Blues scale. The scale has the same notes as the G minor pentatonic scale, G B♭ C D and F. The G Blues scale has the additional note D♭ (or C♯).

G Blues Scale Finger Pattern

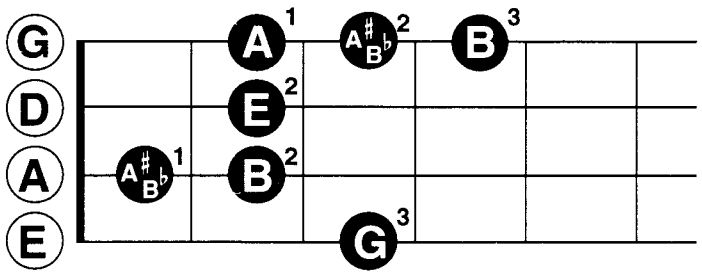


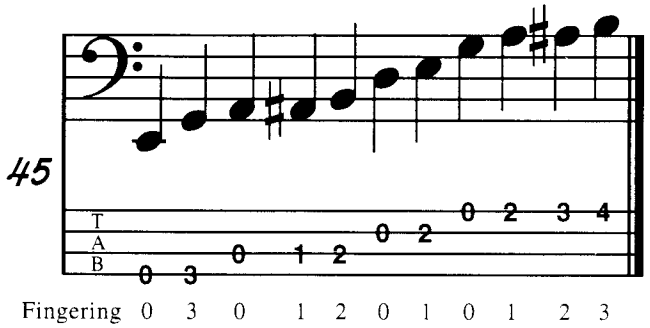
Example 44 uses all the notes of the G Blues scale.



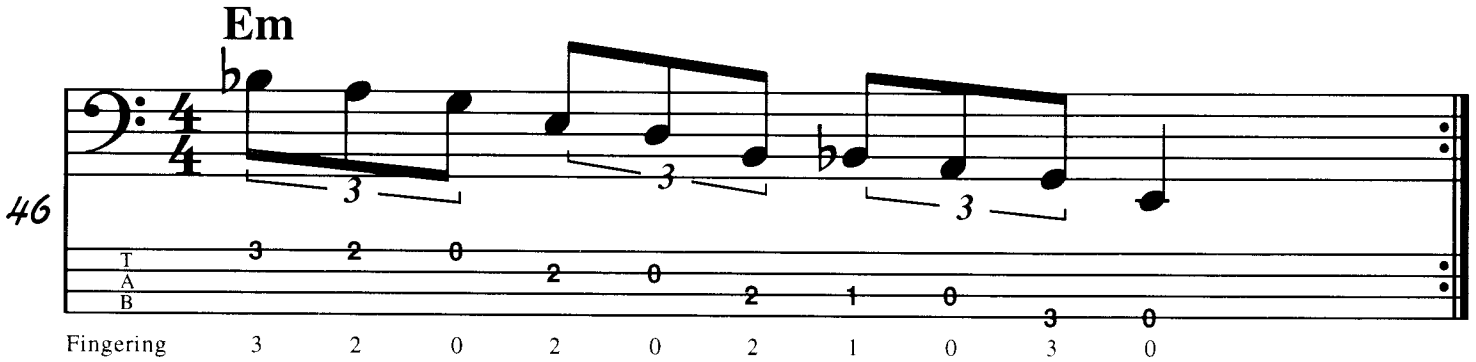
E Blues Scale Pattern 1

Pattern 1 is played in the open position (the first four frets). This pattern ranges from the low E string to the fourth fret of the first string, covering a total of one and a half octaves.



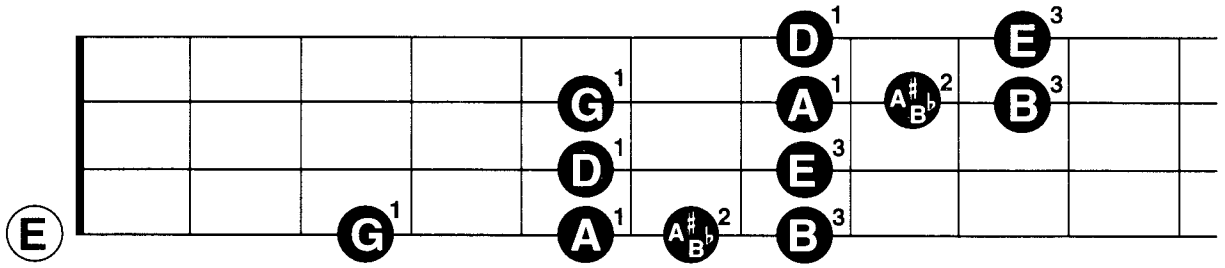


Example 46 is a descending bass run using the notes of the E Blues scale.



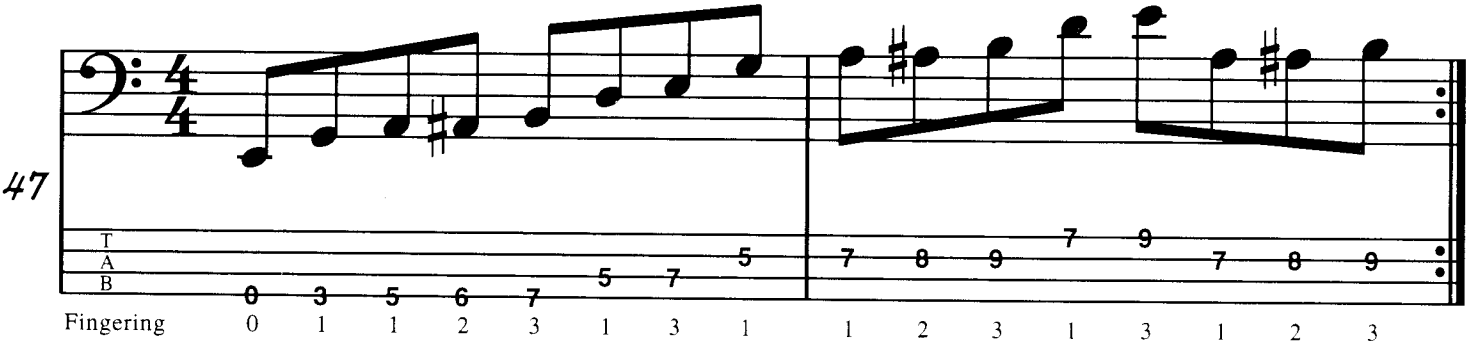
E Blues Scale Pattern 2

Pattern 2 is played using almost all fretted notes. This time two octaves are covered.



There are several options and fingerings for this scale using exactly the same notes but on different locations on the fretboard.

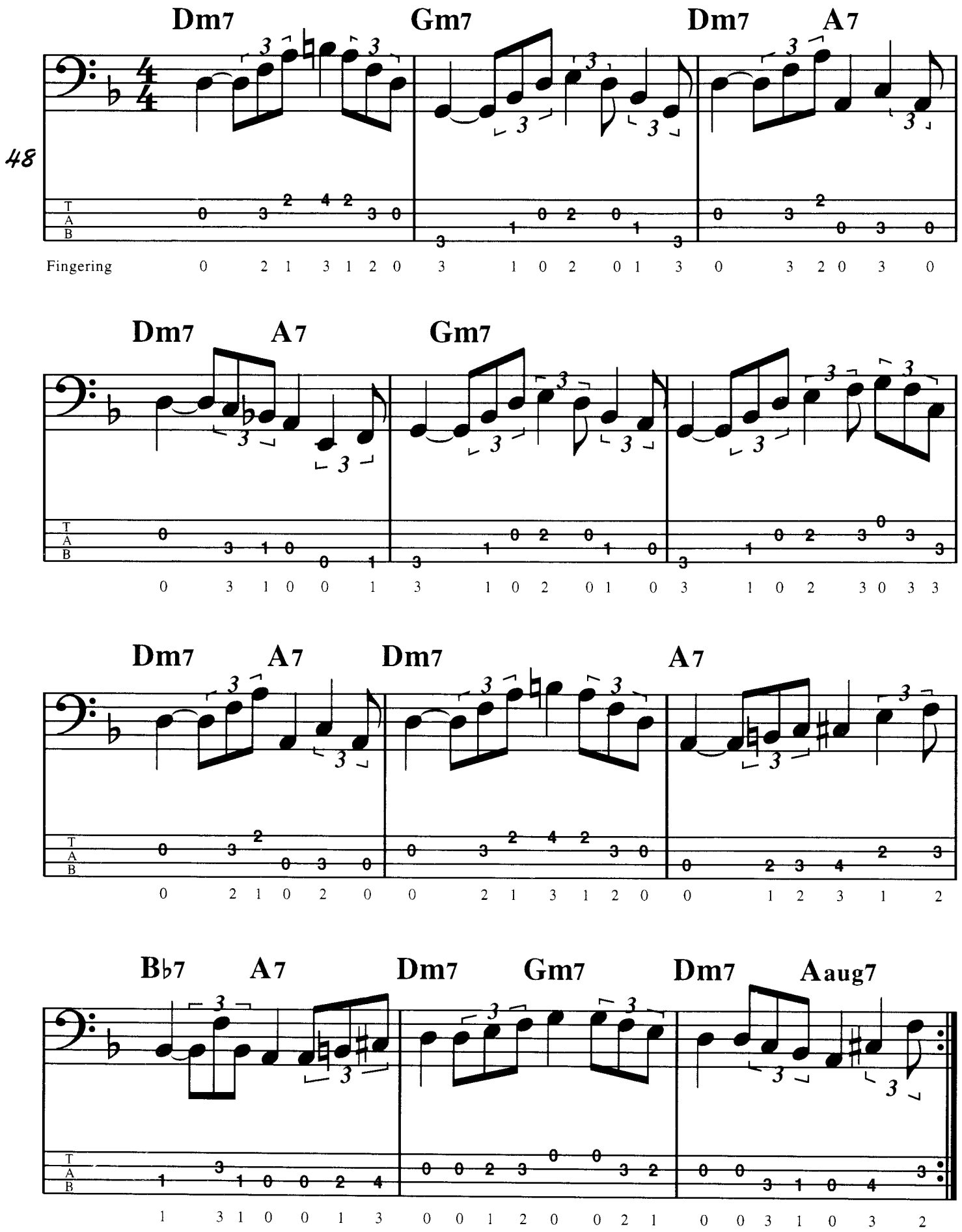
Example 47 is played within Blues pattern 2.



Memorize the patterns illustrated on this page as they are the basis of many basslines, runs, fills, licks and solos. Experiment with them to create your own ideas.

For more Blues bass licks incorporating Blues scales see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks****.*

The following example is a slow minor Blues in the key of D minor.

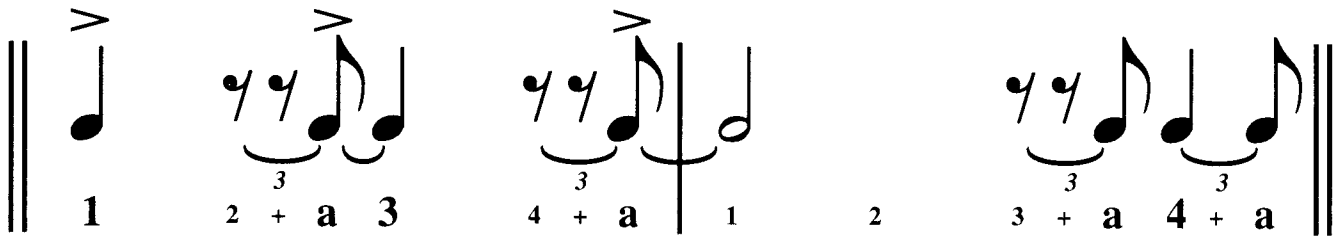


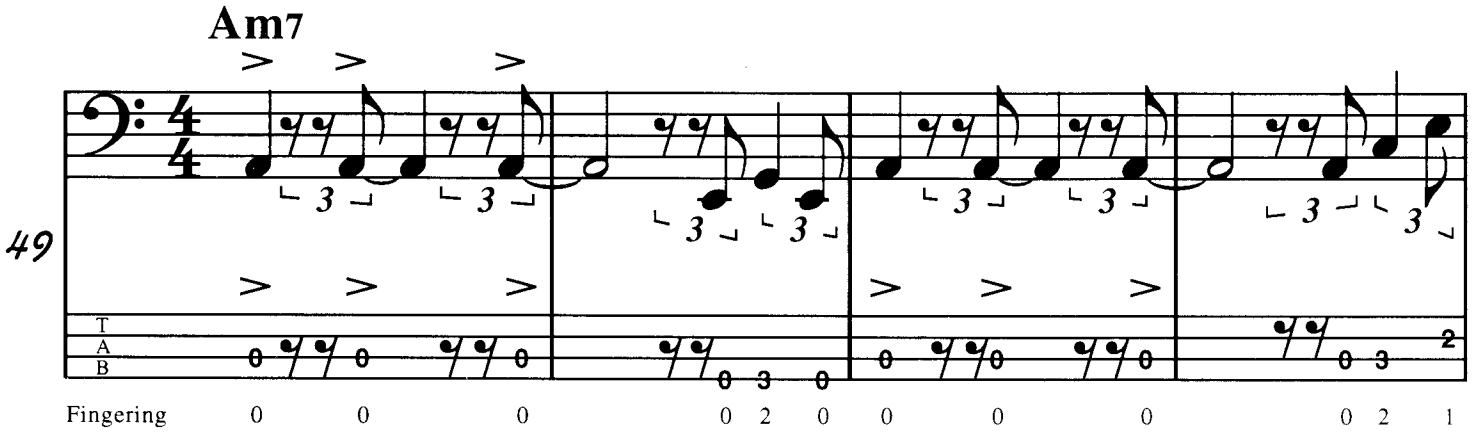
For more Blues bass licks incorporating slow minor Blues see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

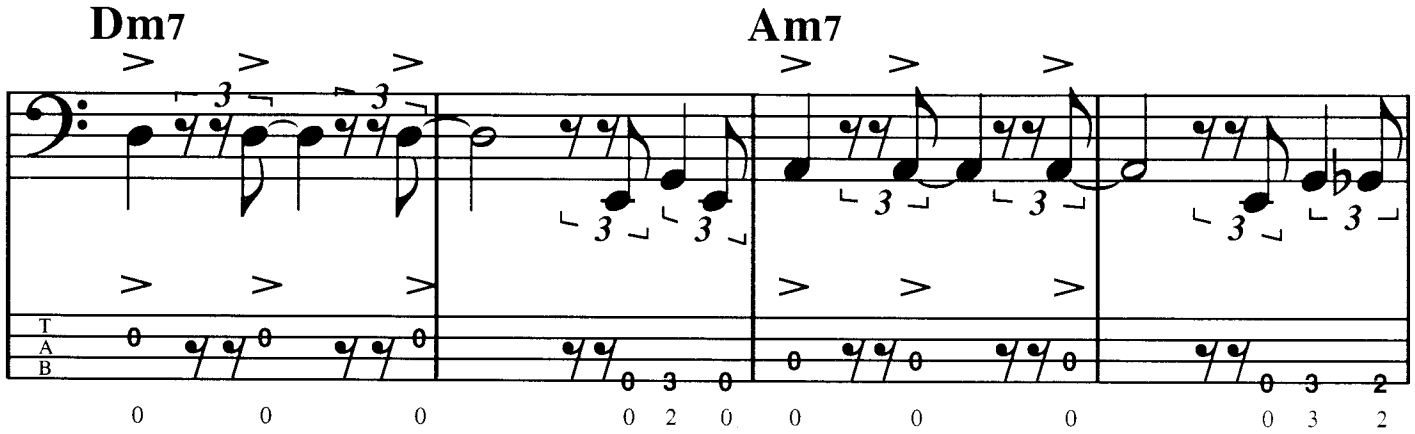
Jazz Blues

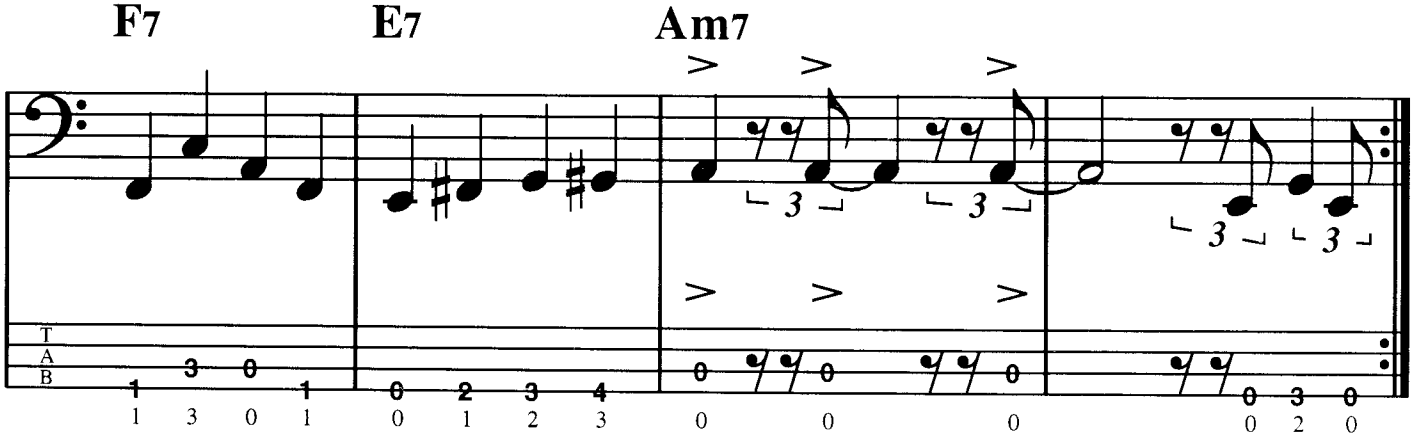
The next example is a 12 bar progression in the key of A minor with a distinct Jazz feel. Study the rhythm pattern below before trying this example. This rhythm pattern is dominant throughout the progression with exception to bars 9 and 10 where a walking bassline is applied. Some notes are played slightly stronger as indicated by the accent symbol(>). Listen to the recording carefully to get the right feel.

Rhythm Pattern

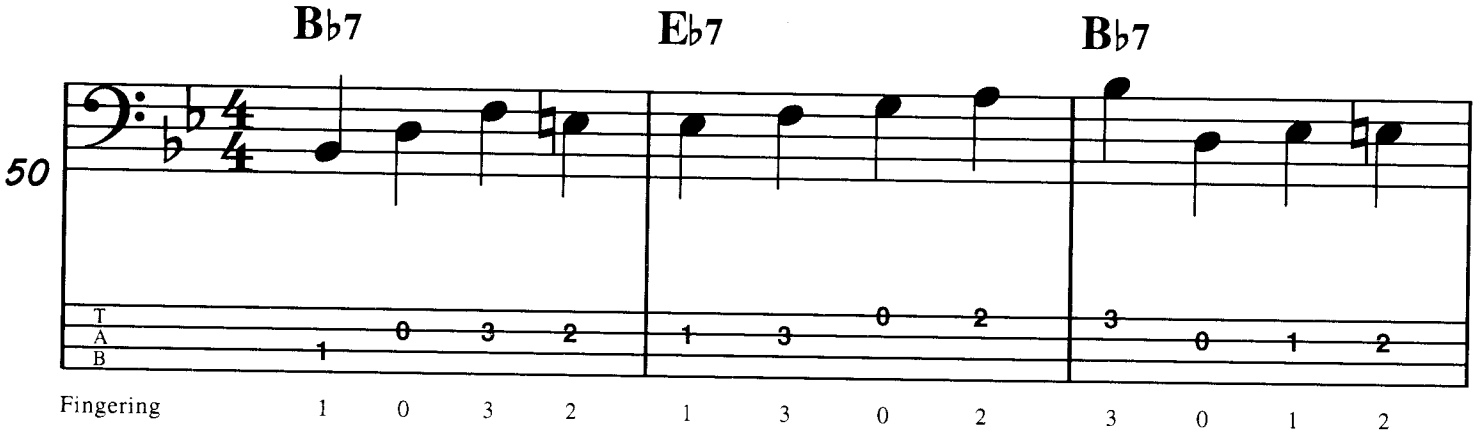


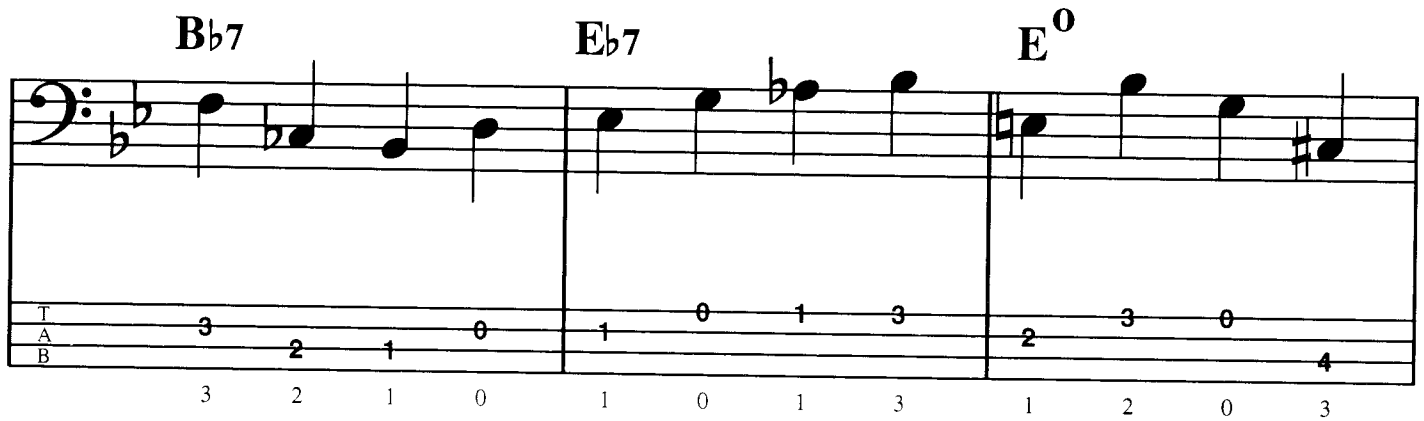


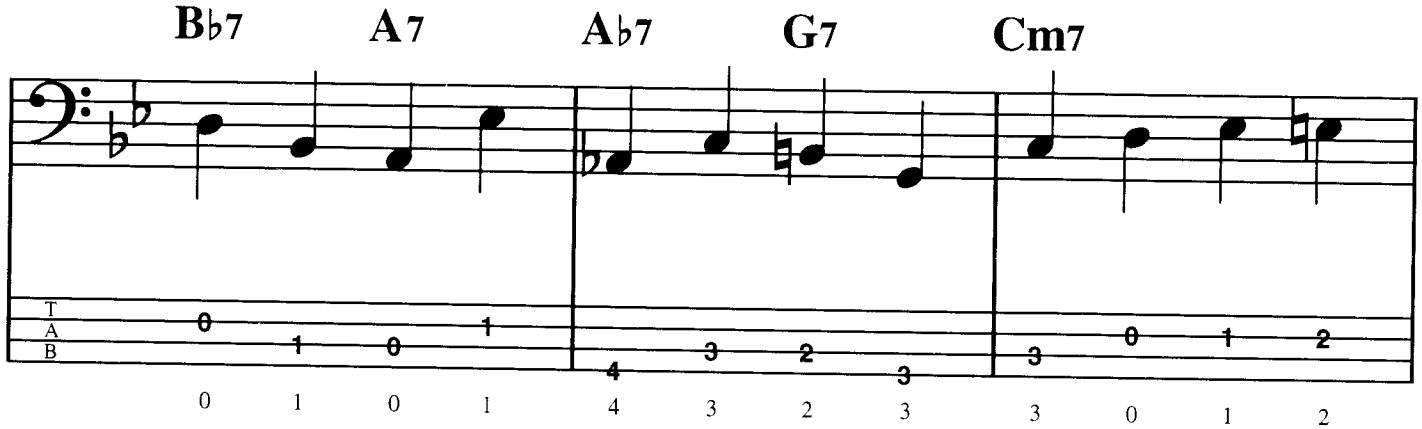


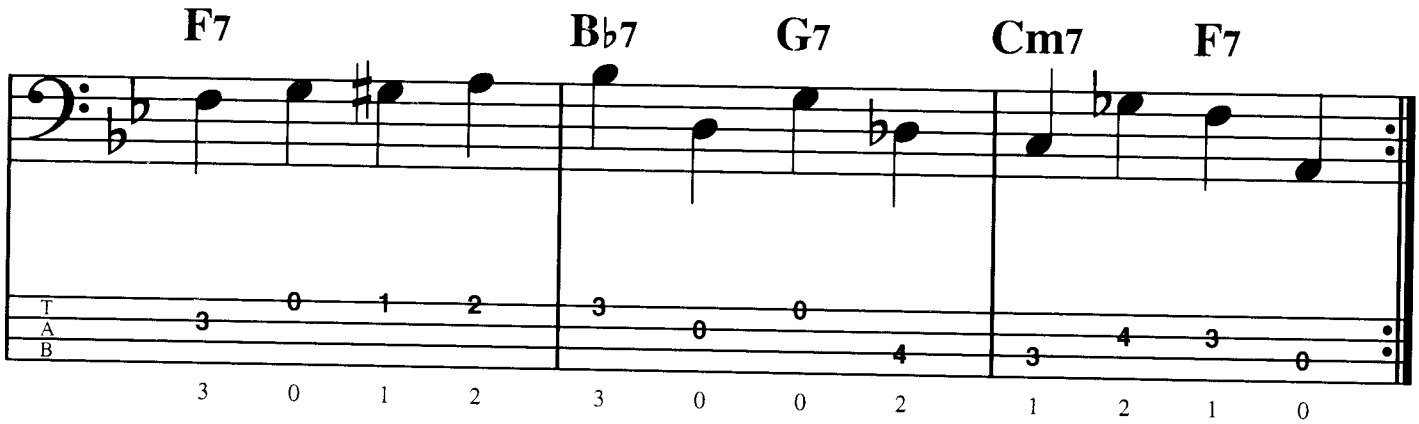


The following example is a 12 Bar Jazz Blues in the key of B♭. A walking bassline is featured.



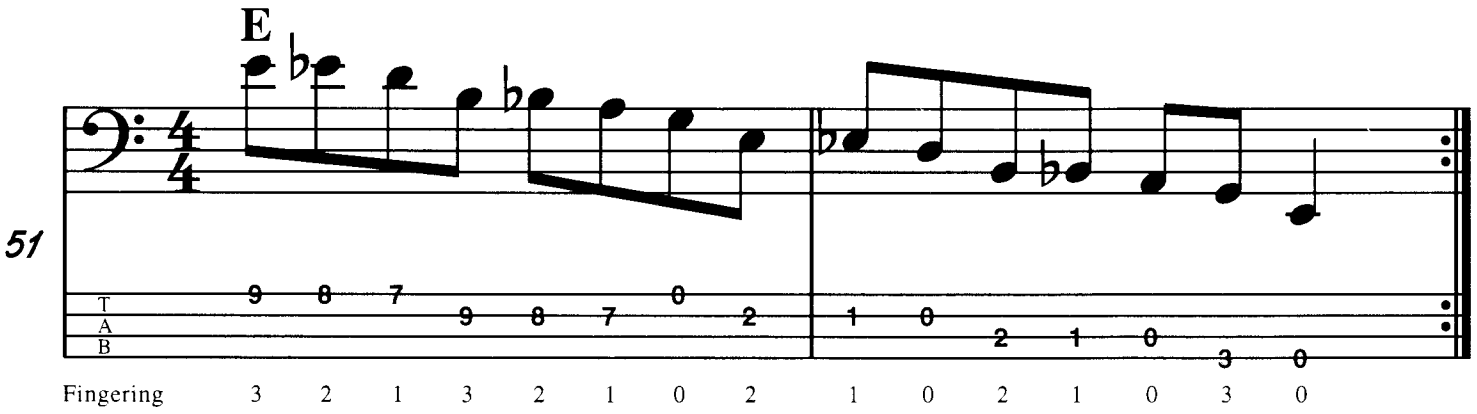


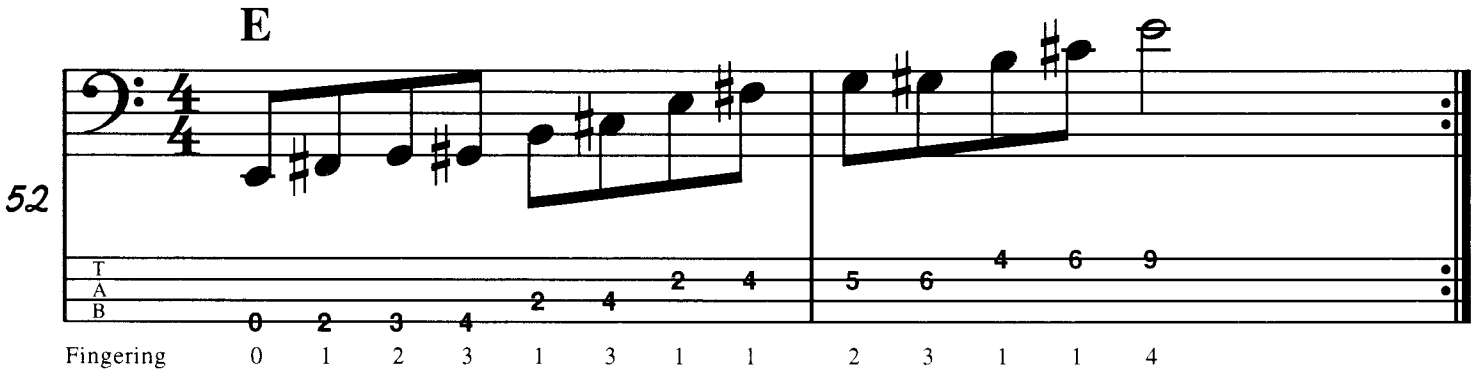




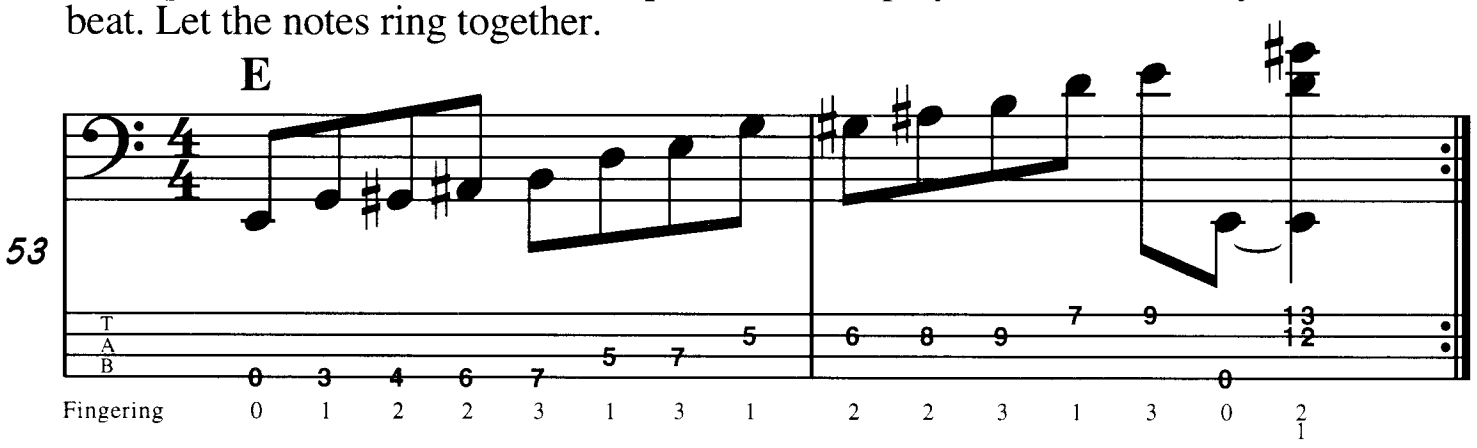
For more Blues bass licks incorporating Jazz Blues see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

The following Blues bass runs are based around the E scales discussed throughout the book. Try applying these to other chords by playing the runs in different positions on the fretboard.

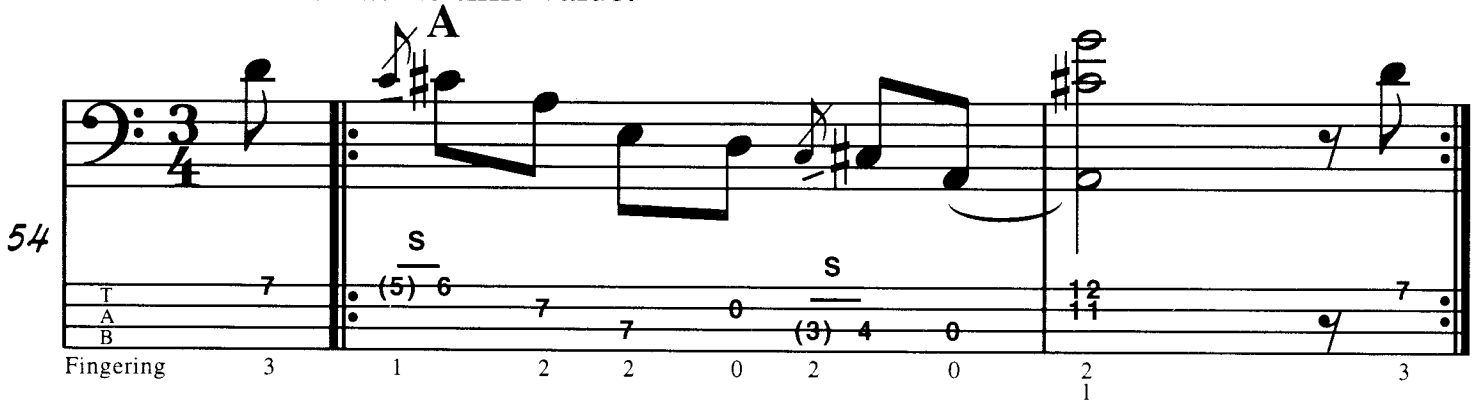




Example 53 introduces double stops (two notes played simultaneously) on the last beat. Let the notes ring together.



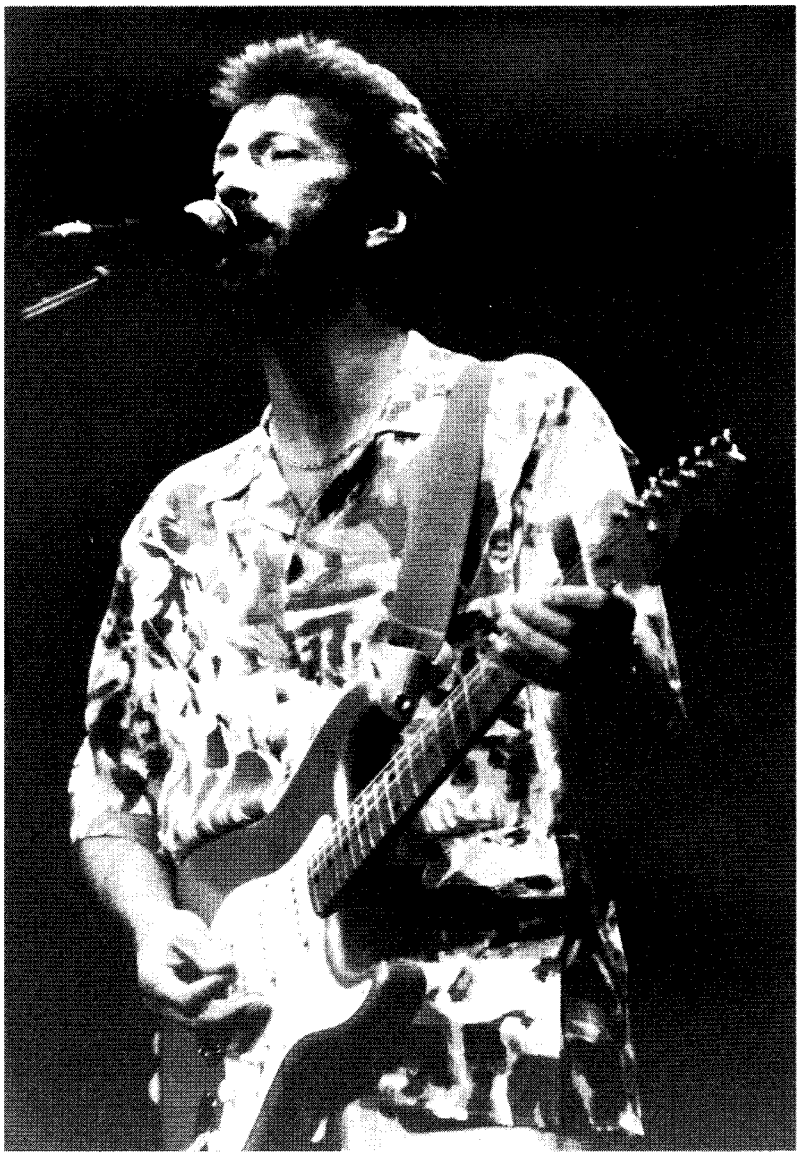
Example 54 introduces three quarter time ($\frac{3}{4}$). This indicates there are only three beats in every bar. Also introduced is the grace note (♪), indicating that the first note of the slide has no time value.



For more Blues bass licks incorporating Blues bass runs see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

SECTION III

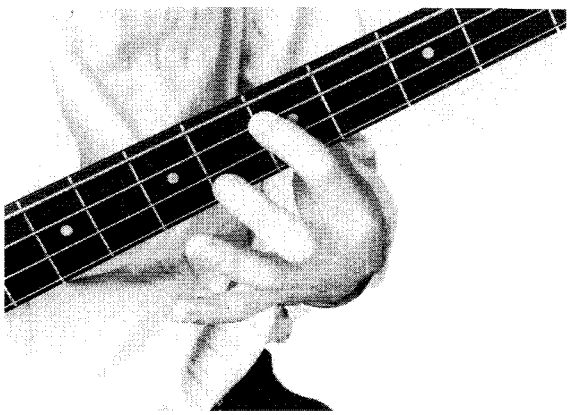
Advanced Blues Bass Techniques.

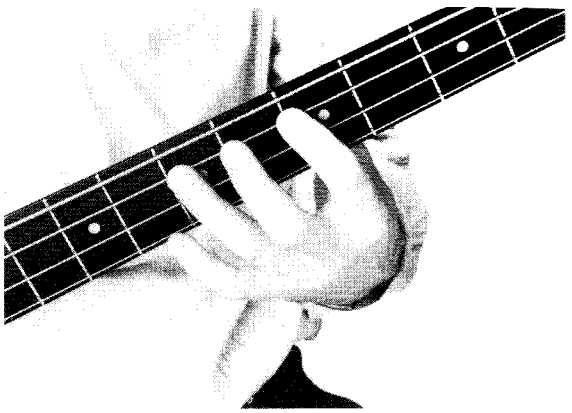


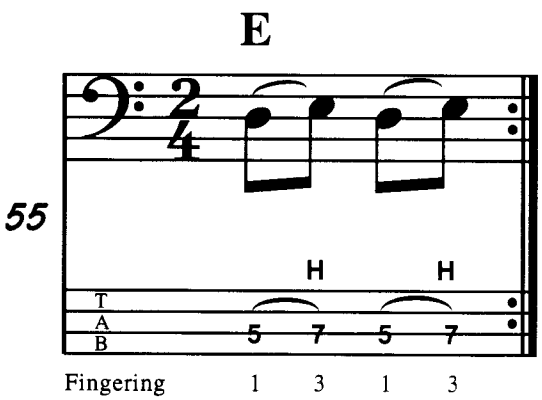
Eric Clapton

The Hammer-on
(marked as H)

A "hammer-on" refers to the technique of sounding a note without actually picking the string (with the pick or the right hand). The sound is produced by striking the string with one of the left hand fingers. In the example below, only the D note is picked, and the third finger "hammers-on" firmly to produce the sound of the E note.

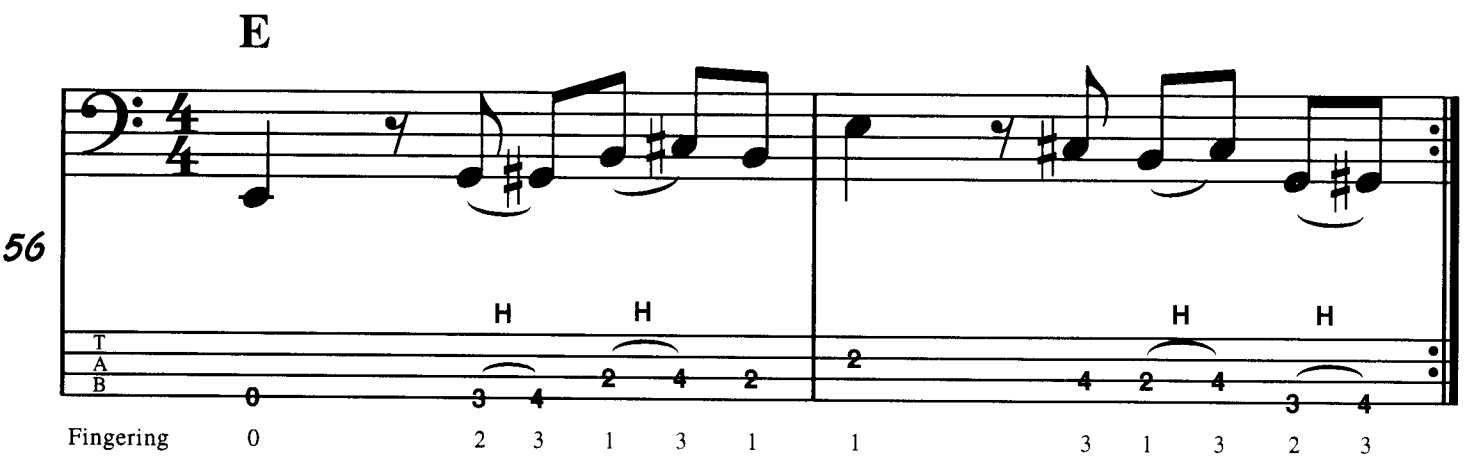




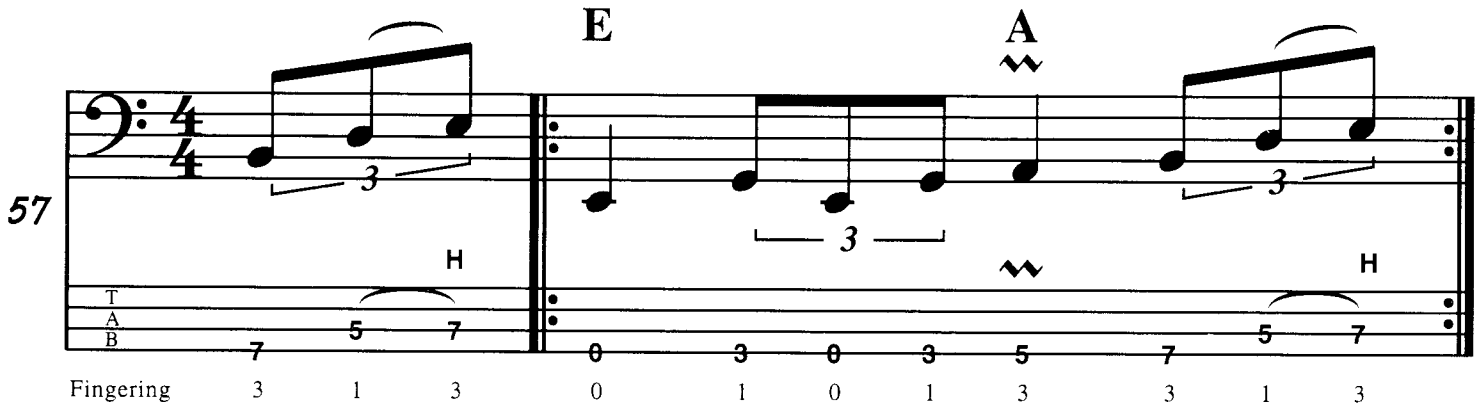


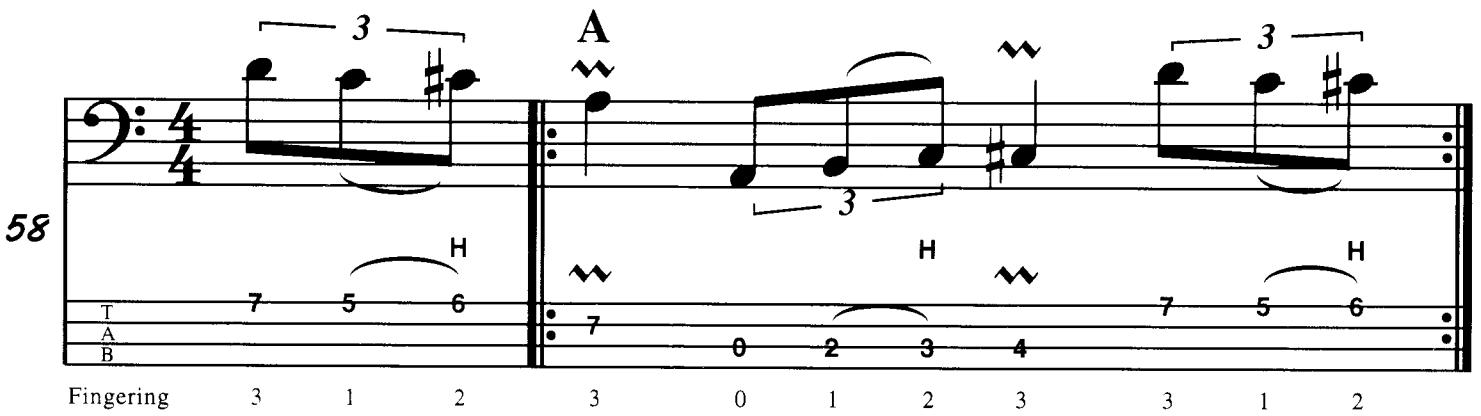
The hammer-on effect is indicated by the curved line, and the "H" above the note in question. Remember that the second note (E), is not picked; the sound is produced entirely by the third finger "hammering-on" to the string. You must be very careful with the timing of the hammer-on. Both the D and E notes are eighth notes and each should have an equal time value when played (regardless of the hammer-on technique).

Example 56 uses the hammer-on technique.

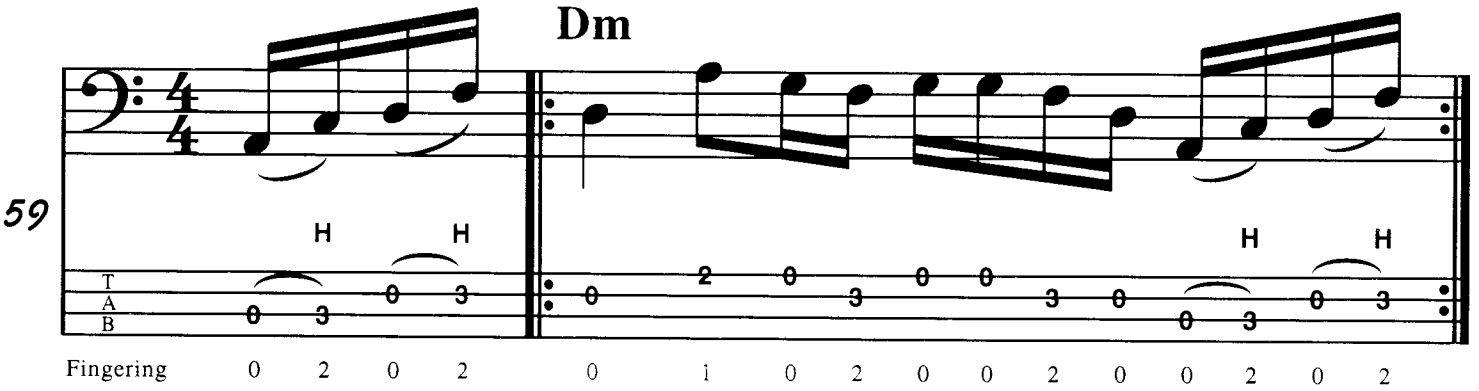


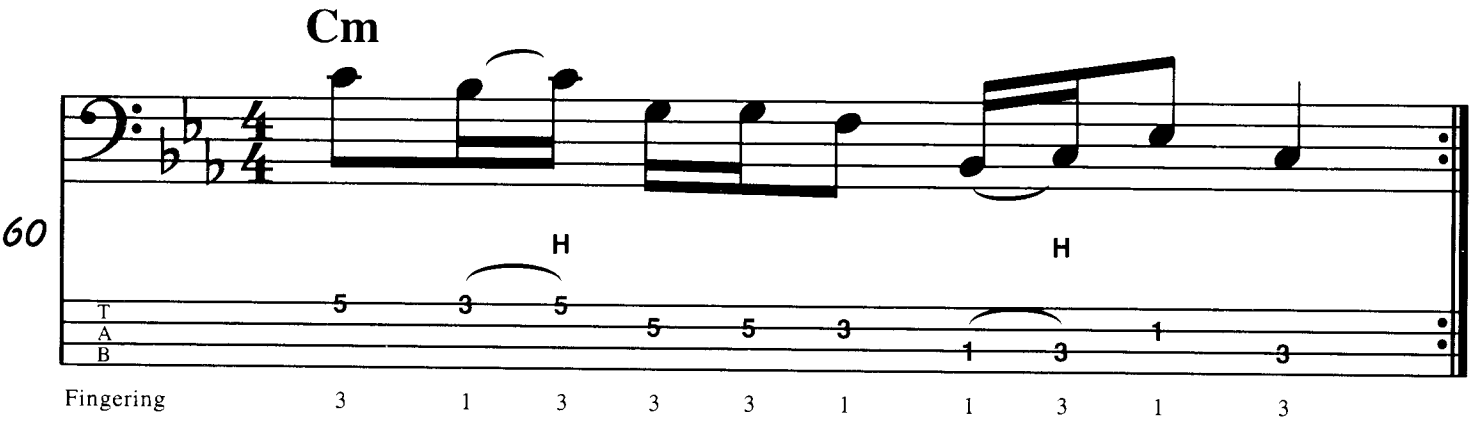
Vibrato (∿) is added to some notes in examples 57 and 58. This technique involves moving the string rapidly back and forth in the direction of the adjacent strings immediately after the note has sounded. Listen carefully to the recording.





The following example introduces a hammer-on from an open string. Examples 59 and 60 also introduce sixteenth notes, a total of 4 notes per beat.

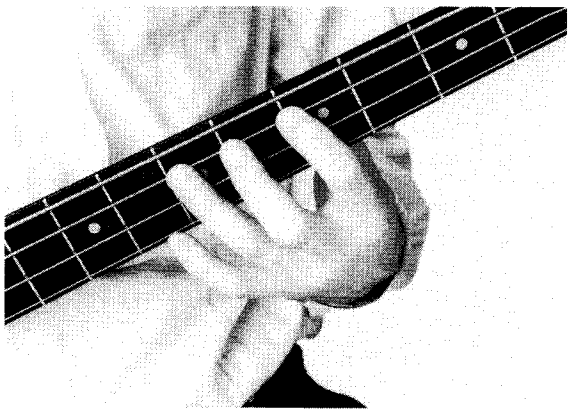


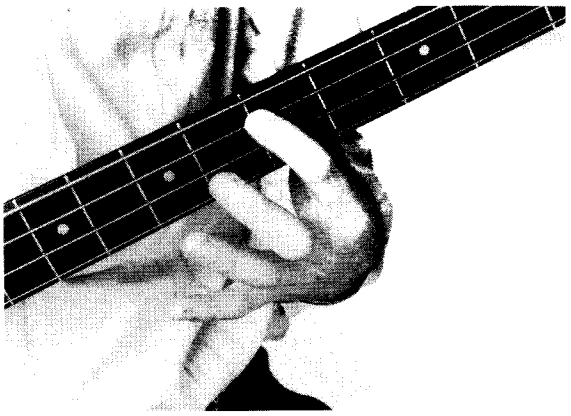


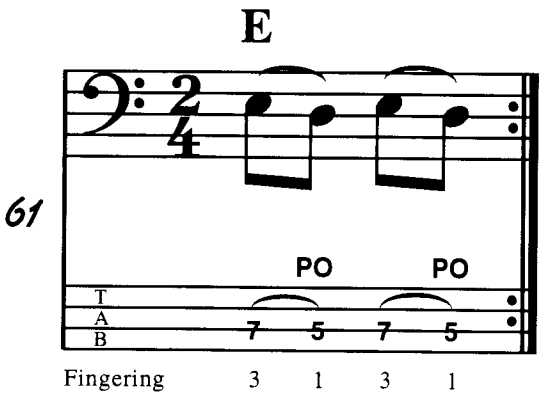
For more Blues bass licks incorporating Hammer Ons see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks****.*

The Pull-Off
(marked as PO)

A "pull-off" is another technique of sounding a note without actually picking the string (with the pick or the right hand). This time a left hand finger is pulled away from the string after fretting the note. In the example below, only the E note is picked, but the third finger "pulls-off" the string to produce the sound of the D note.

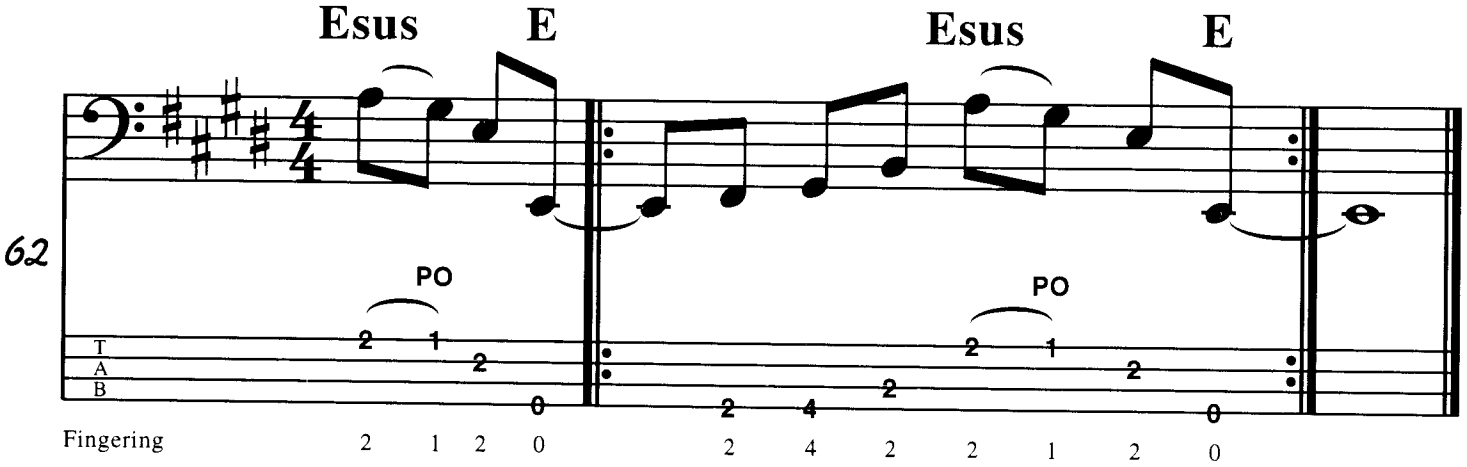






The pull-off effect is indicated by the curved line, and the "PO" above the note in question. Remember that the second note (D), is not picked; the sound is produced entirely by the third finger "pulling-off" the string. You must be very careful with the timing of the pull-off. Both the E and D notes are eighth notes and each should have an equal time value when played (regardless of the pull-off technique).

Example 62 uses the pull-off technique.

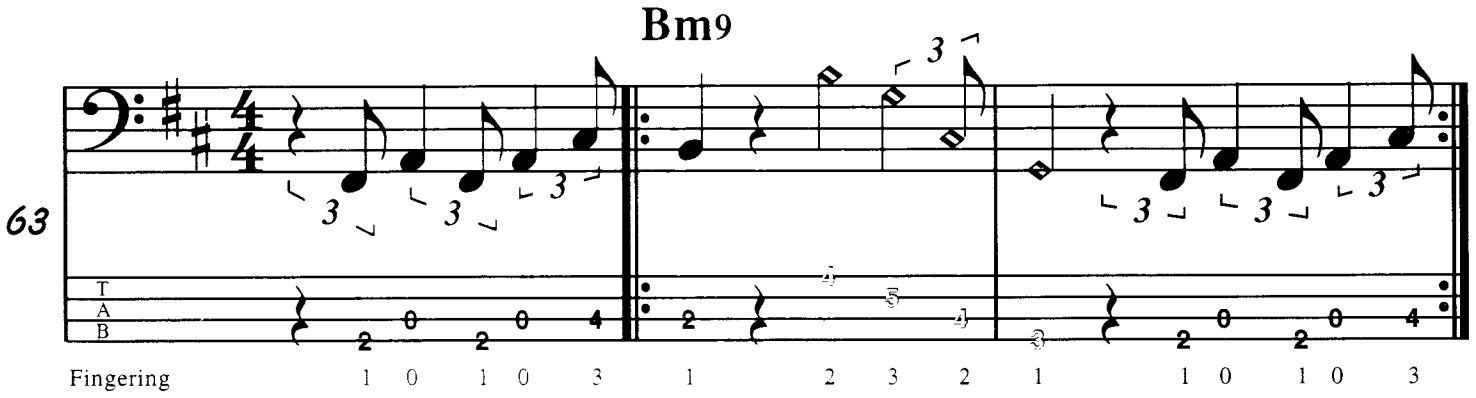


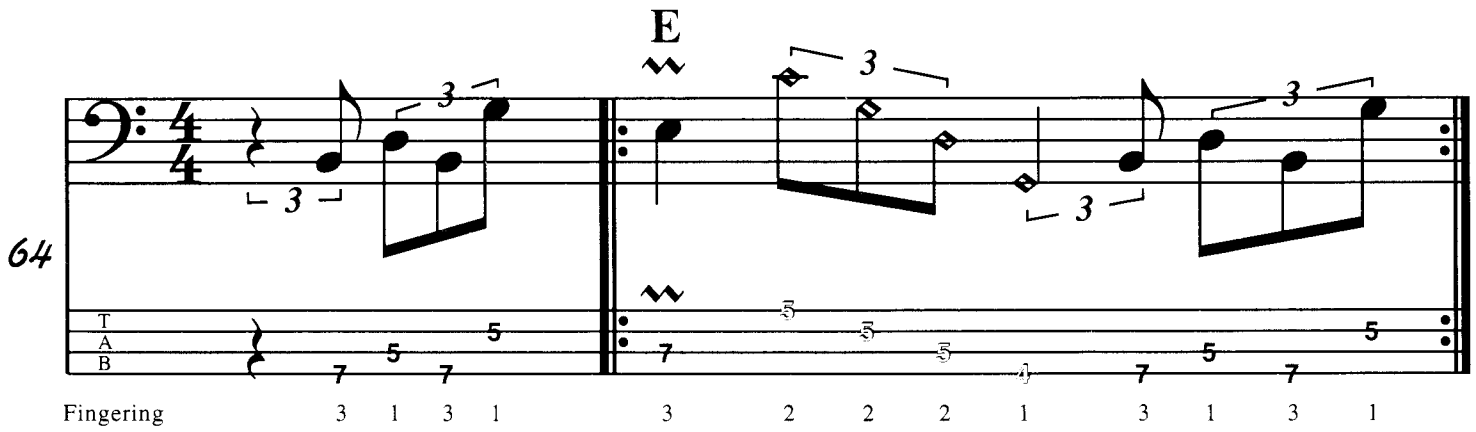
Harmonics

A harmonic is a chime like sound created by lightly touching a vibrating string with the left hand at certain points along the fretboard. The left hand must be positioned directly above the fret just touching the string (i.e. without pressing down), Harmonics are most easily played on the 12th, 7th and 5th frets. In the example below harmonics are played on the 7th fret of each string.

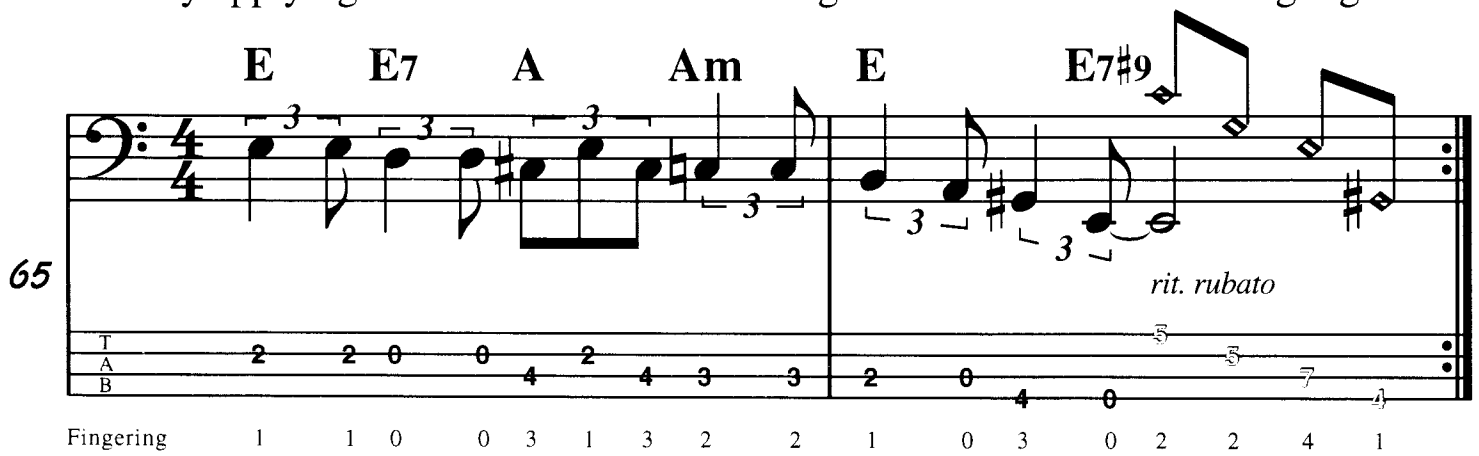
Harmonics are also useful for tuning the bass guitar (see appendix on tuning). To get a brighter sound, which is essential when playing harmonics, position the right hand closer to the bridge (back pick-up).

Examples 63 and 64 incorporate harmonics.





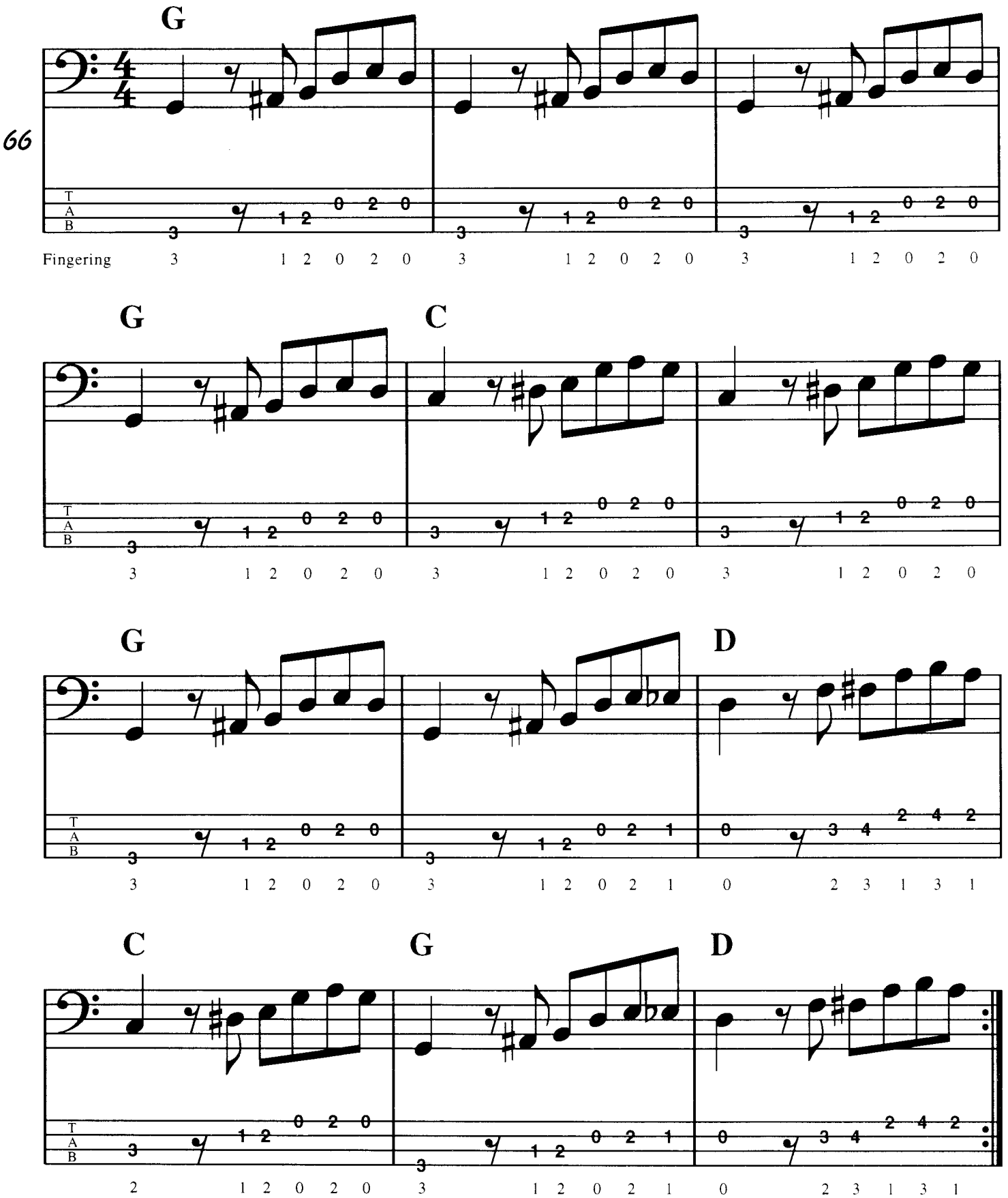
Now try applying harmonics to a Blues ending. Let the last four notes ring together.



Examples 66 - 68 introduce three Blues composite styles: *Rock-Latin Blues, Reggae Blues* and *Blues Funk.*

Rock-Latin Blues

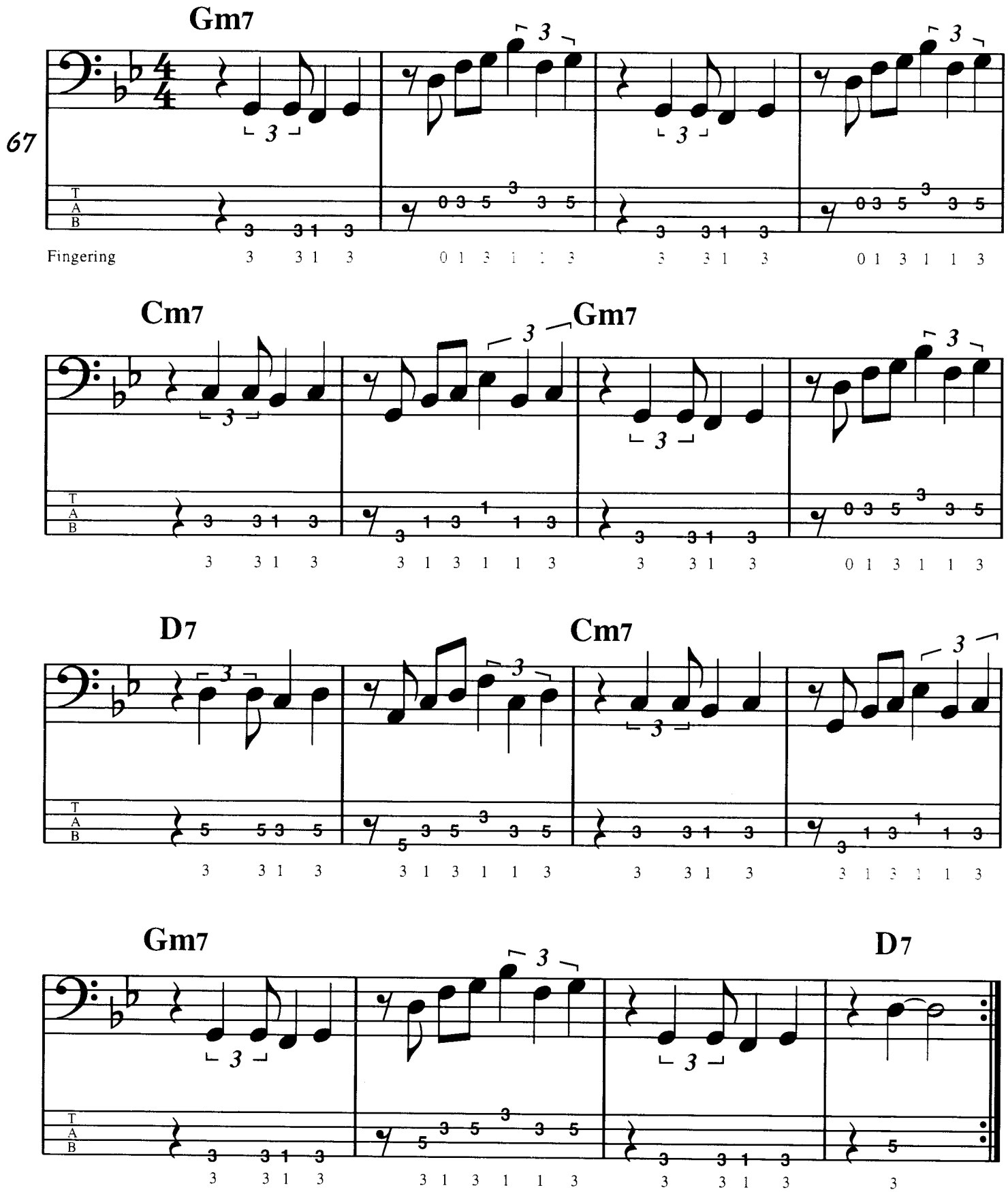
The following example is a **Rock-Latin Blues** in the key of G major.



For more Blues bass licks incorporating Rock-Latin Blues see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

Reggae Blues

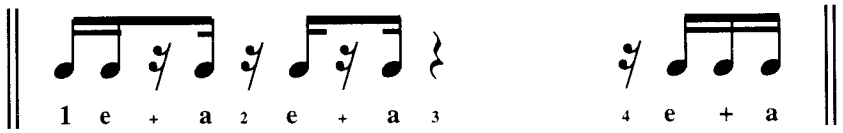
The next example is a **reggae** influenced Blues in the key of G minor, consisting of 16 bars. Introduced at the end of every second bar is a **quarter note triplet**, i.e, three quarter notes are played for the exact same time as two quarter notes. Listen to the recording carefully to get the feel of the quarter note triplet.

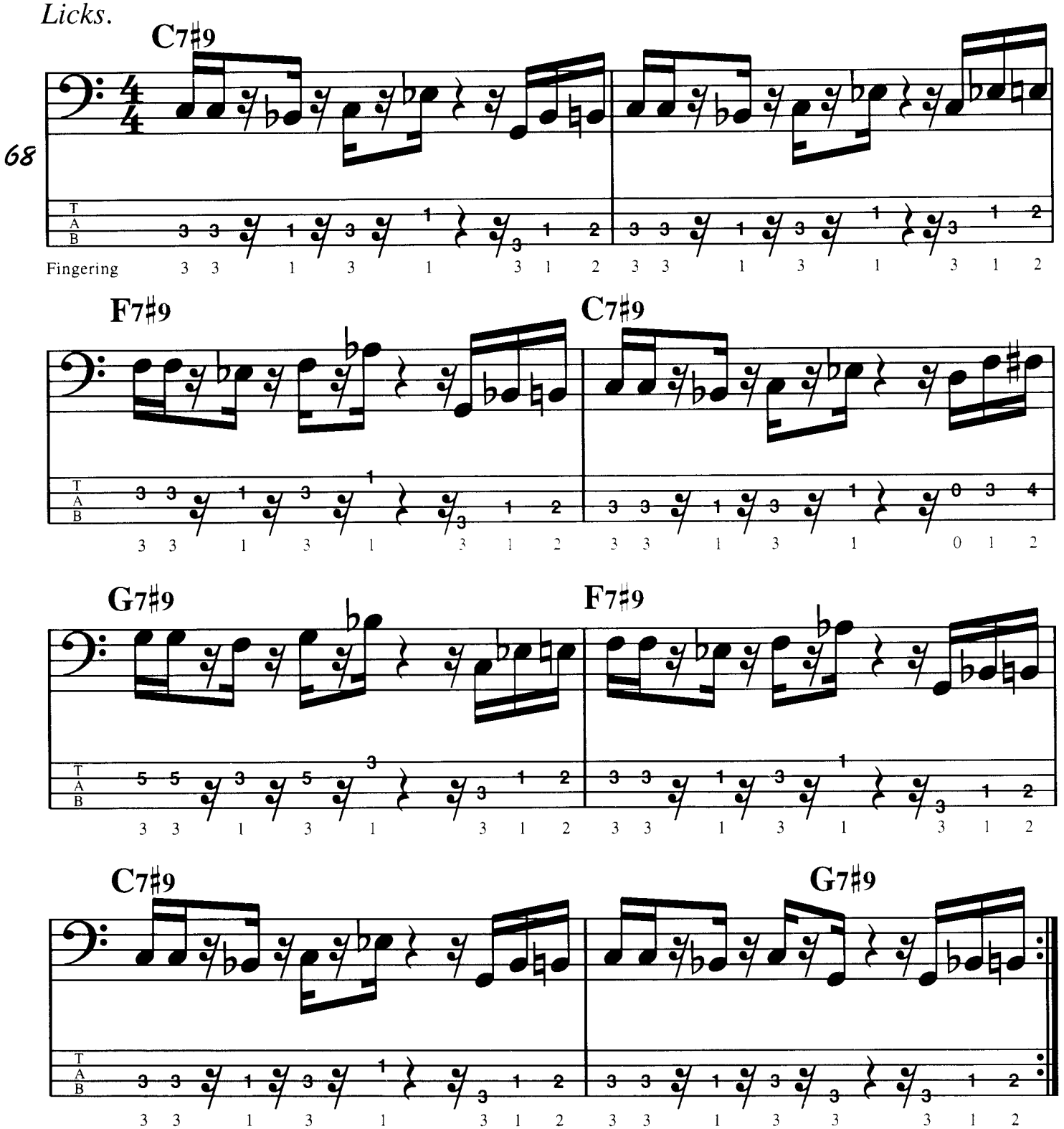


Blues Funk

Study the rhythm pattern below before attempting the Blues Funk example. The rhythm is used throughout the example and it will be necessary to listen carefully to the recording to get the timing and how the bassline fits with the drums. For further studies on how bass and drums work together see *Progressive Rhythm Section Method*. For more studies on Funk, Latin, Jazz etc, see *Progressive Rhythm Section Grooves* and *Progressive Bass Licks*.

Rhythm Pattern





For more Blues bass licks incorporating Funk Blues see ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

The Slap Technique

The Thumb (marked as T)

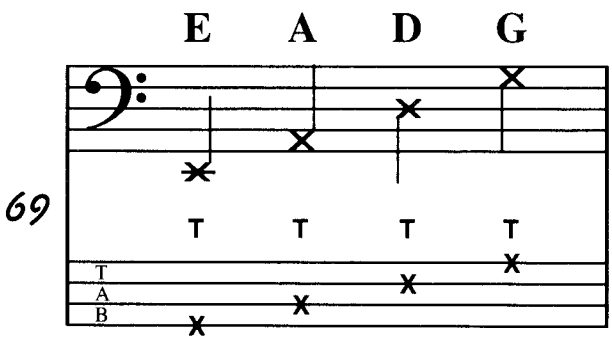
Hit the thumb against the string close to the fingerboard rapidly and firmly, twisting the wrist then releasing the thumb immediately after contact with the string. This rhythmic attack is characteristic to slap playing and is one of the selection of sounds that create the complete slap.

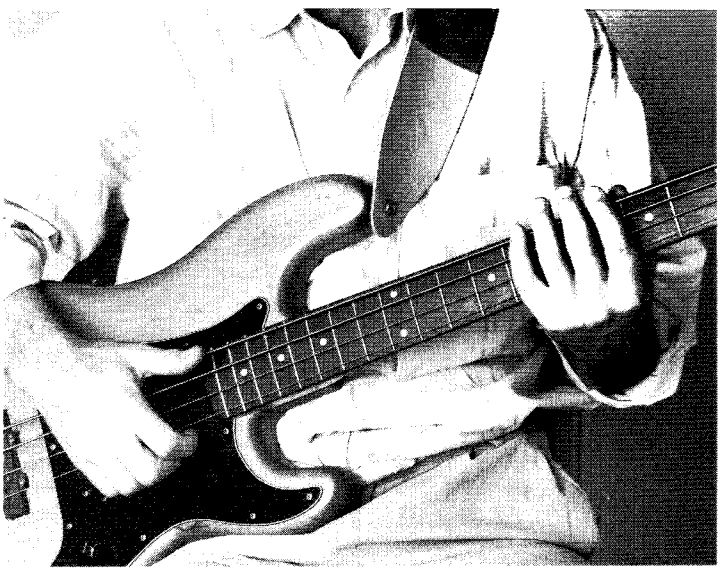
A long sustained note plays an important role in the outcome of the sound. It is achieved by the accuracy and firmness of the movement not by the force used. Smashing the string will not produce a clear sound and will in fact create unwanted background noise. Control of noise is imperative.

Ghost Notes

Ghost notes are notes achieved by muting a string with your left hand while playing it. They have no distinguishable pitch, and are represented with an **X**. To mute the string, lightly place your left hand fingers on it without pressing down. Be careful not to produce any ringing sound (harmonics or a hammer-on note).

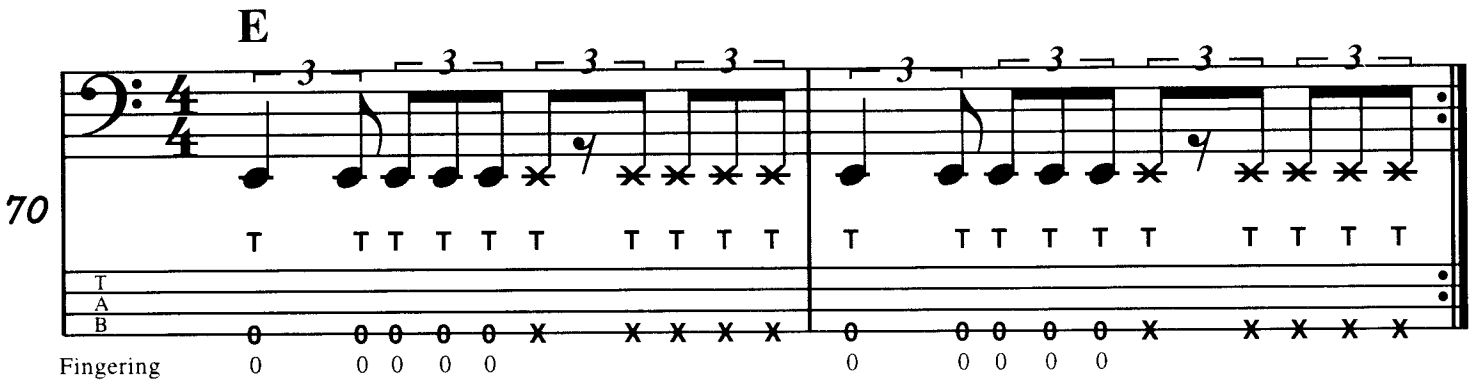
For ease of playing, mute the string in the same area of the fretboard as you are playing the other (fretted) notes.



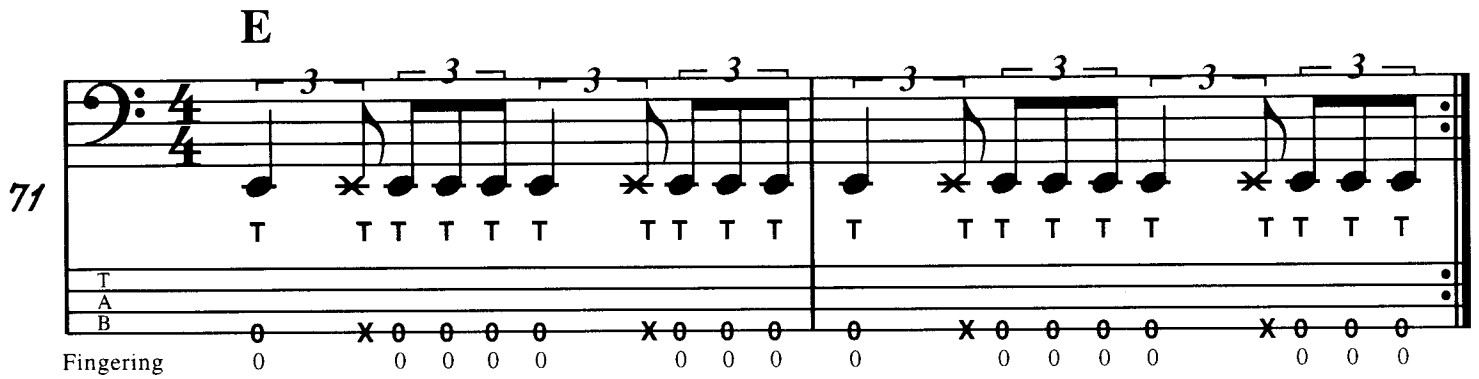


It can be seen that each ghost note corresponds with one particular string.

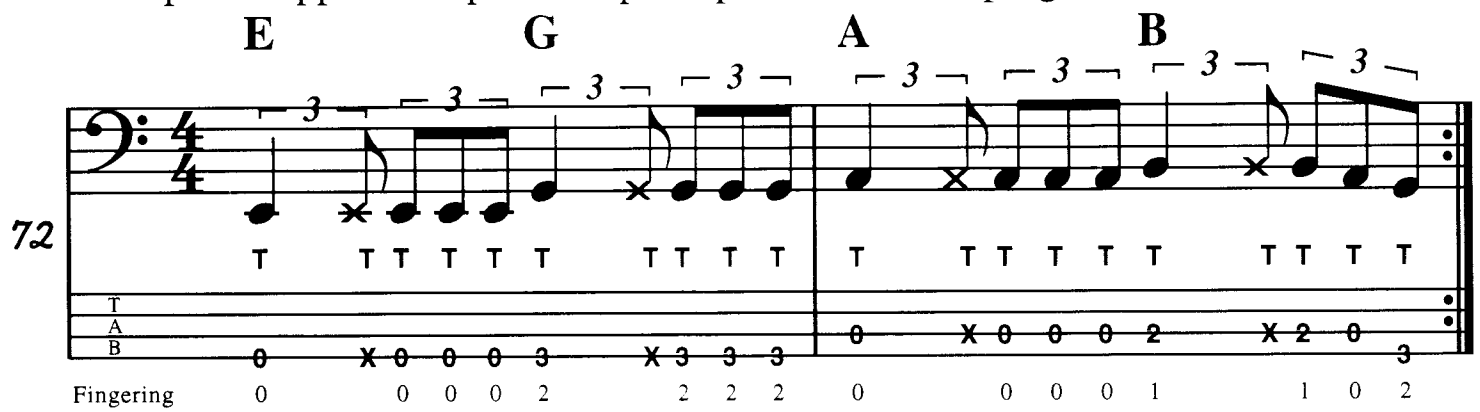
Example 70 uses the slap technique on the open E string only and ghost notes. Check your sound to insure that there is a clear distinction between your normal notes and ghost notes.



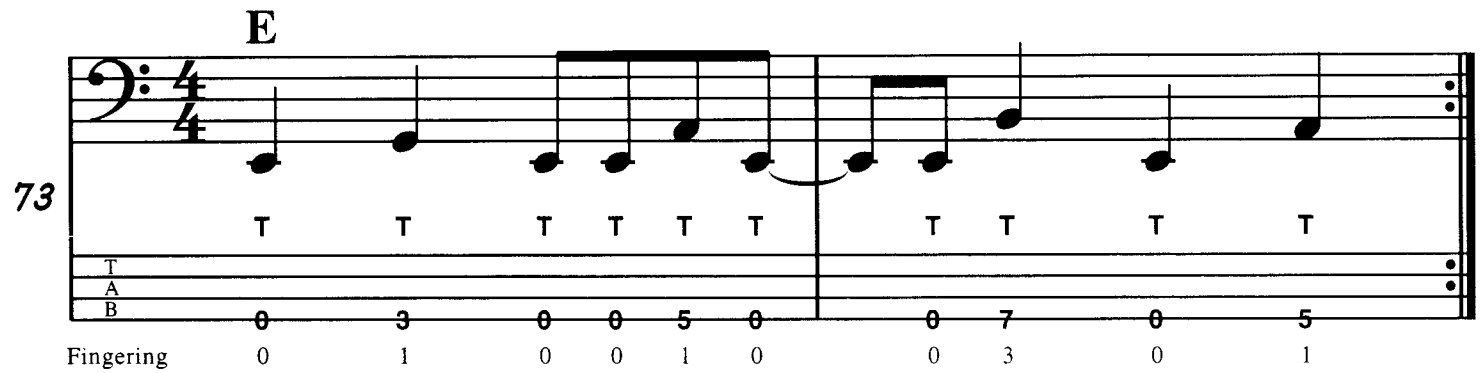
Example 71 uses the same rhythm concept alternating between normal notes and ghost notes, however the ghost notes appear on different parts of the bar.



Example 72 applies the previous principal into a chord progression.



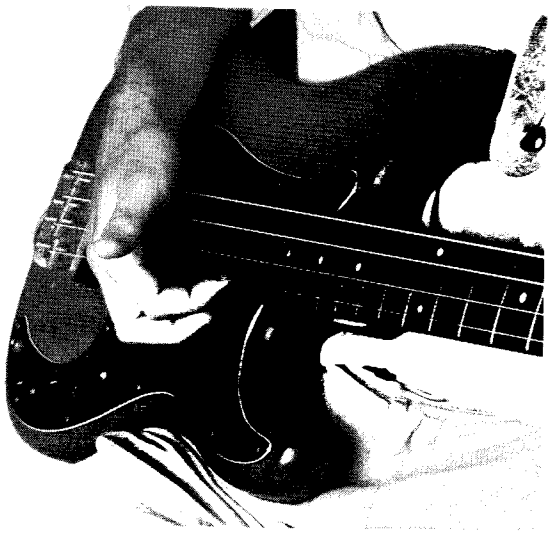
Example 73 is also played entirely on the E string, this time no ghost notes are used.



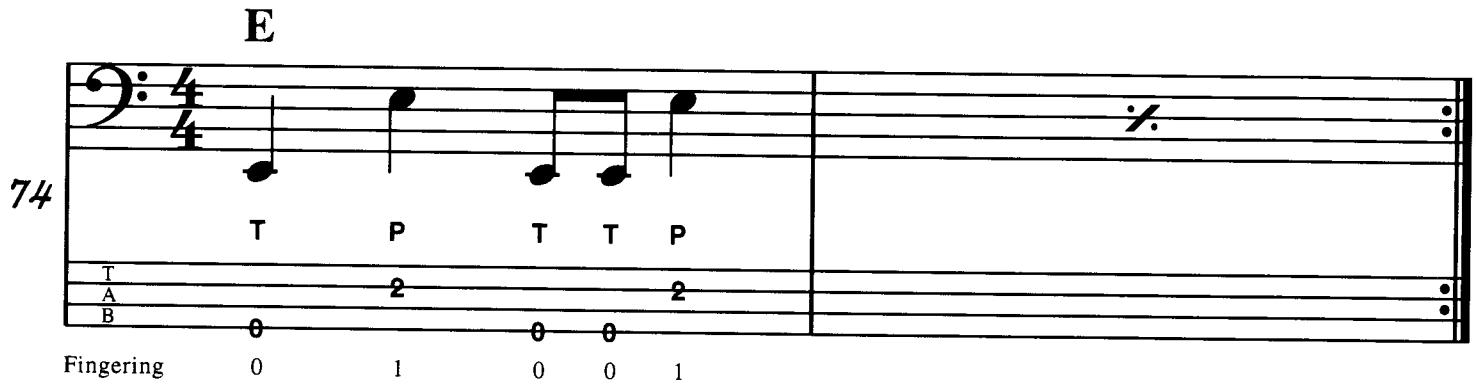
The Popping Effect

(marked as P)

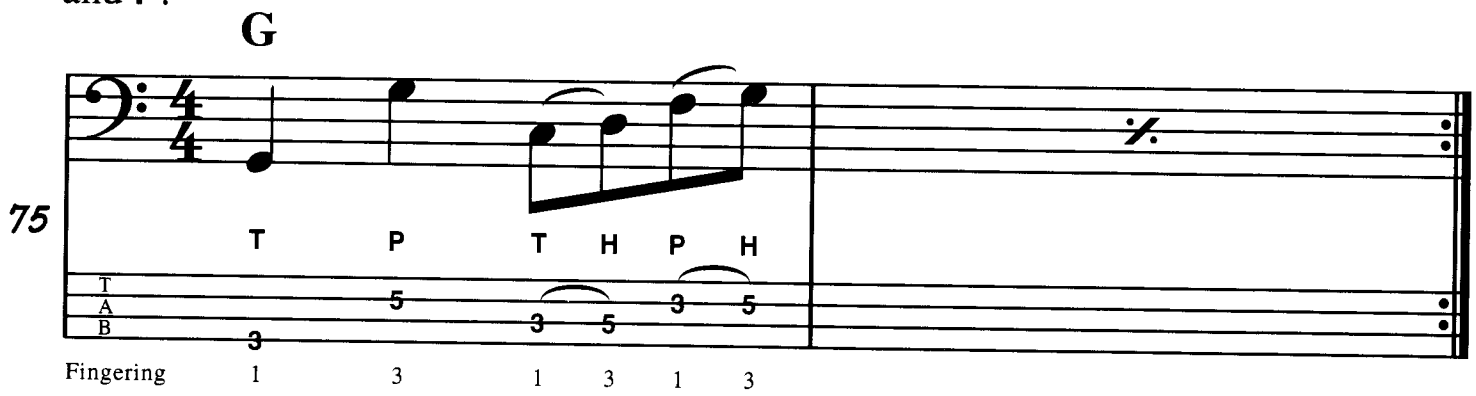
The popping effect (indicated by **P**) is achieved by pulling the string with the index or middle finger of your right hand and at the same time turning the wrist outwards and then releasing it. As it snaps back on the finger board and frets, it produces a more attacking rhythmic sound than that produced by the thumb alone. If a "popped" note is to be played following a slapped note you should place (**P**) under the string about to be popped at the same time the thumb (**T**) hits the note to be slapped. e.g. The two actions should be done in one movement.



Example 74 introduces the popping effect combined with thumb slapping.

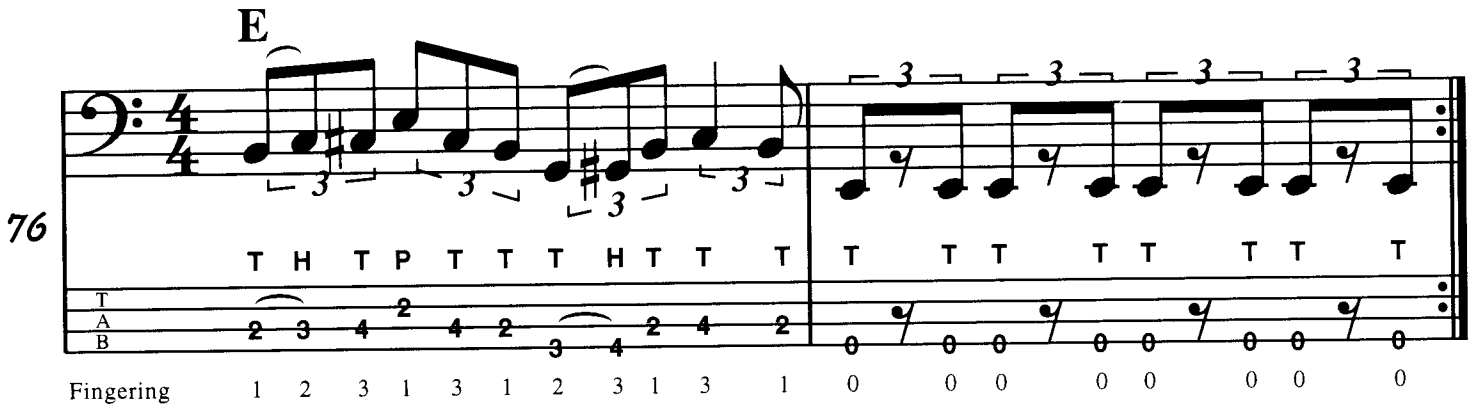


Example 75 uses the same concept as above combined with hammer-ons after **T** and **P**.

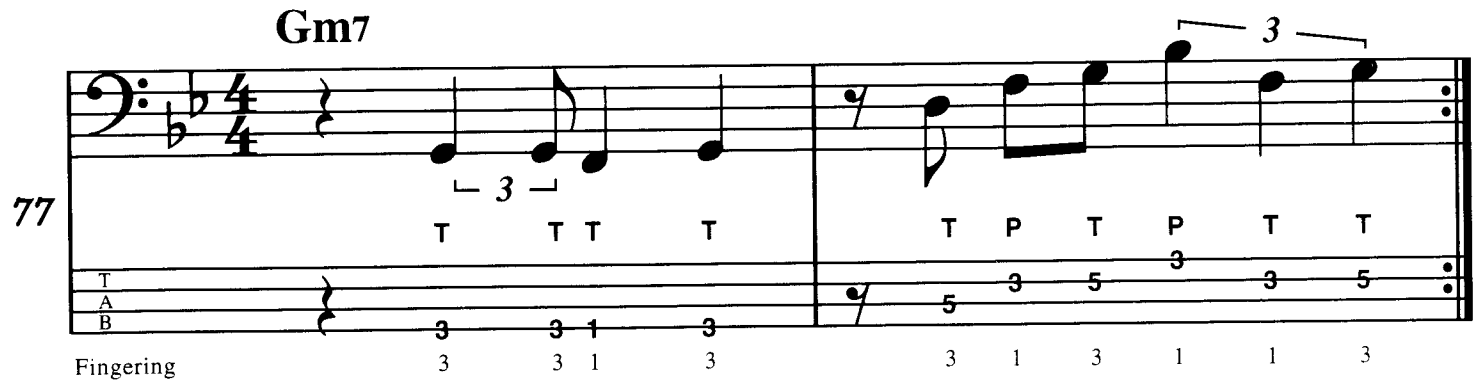


Slap Grooves

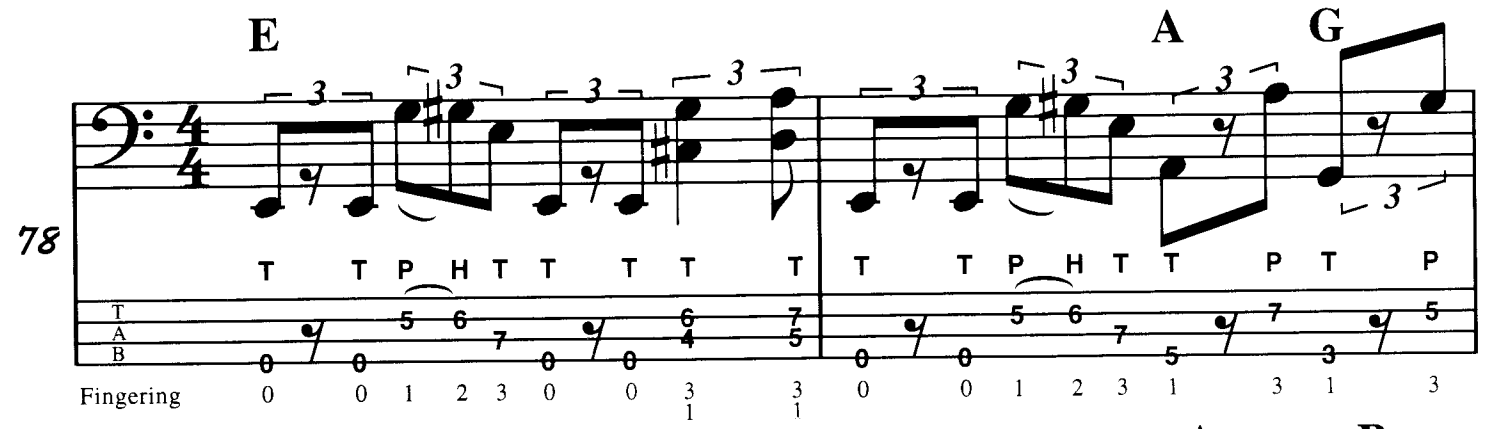
Example 76 is a bass run combining the slap technique with the shuffle rhythm.

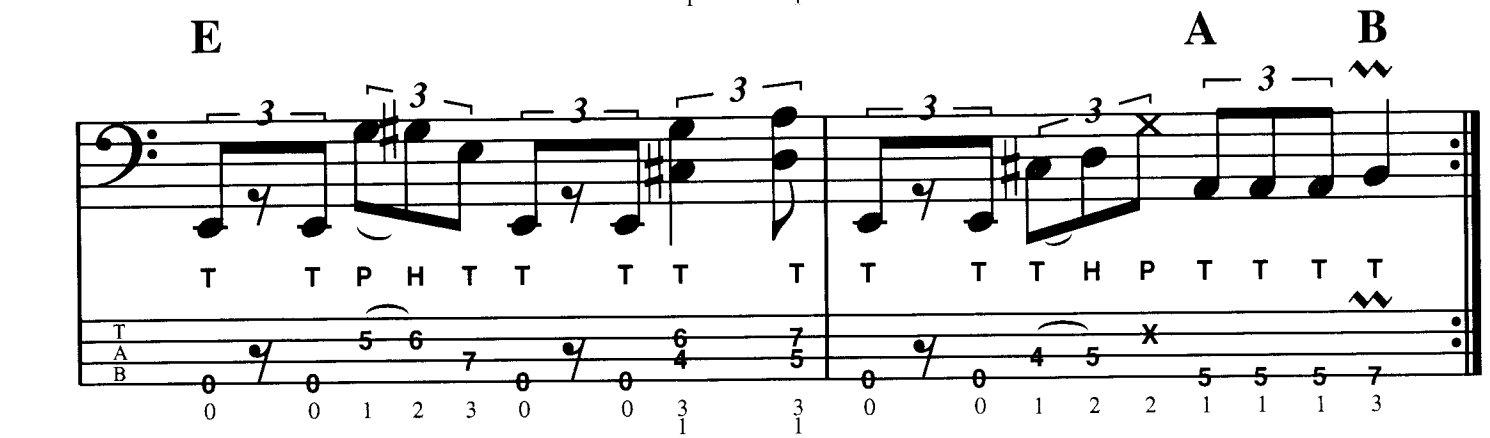


The next example is the same riff found throughout example 67, this time with the slap technique. You may wish to go back and try all of example 67 using this style.

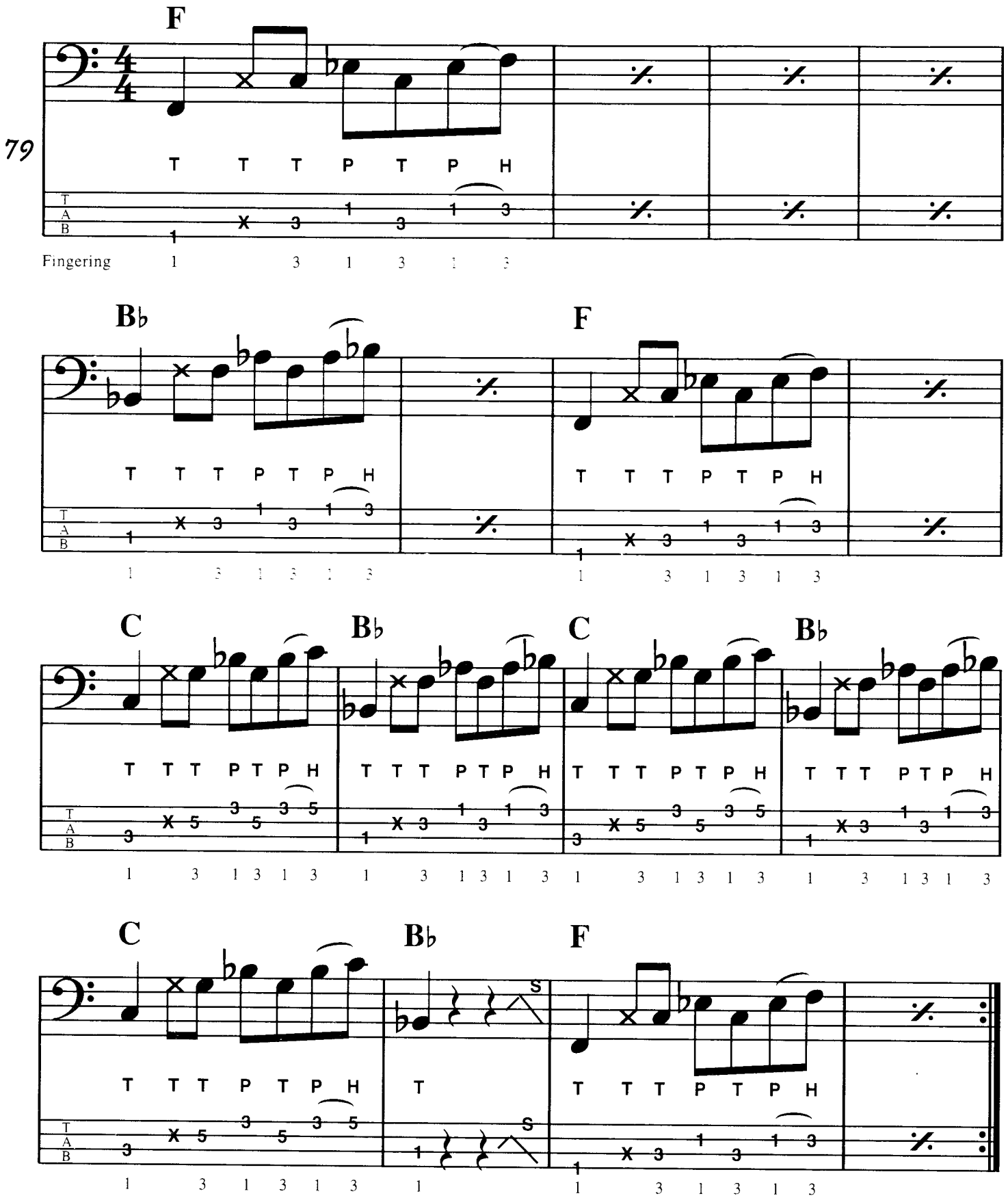


Example 78 combines double stops with other techniques discussed earlier.





A slap groove is featured in example 79. A one bar riff is used with **T**, **P**, hammer-ons and ghost notes. It is applied on a 16 bar variation of the 12 bar Blues Rock progression. Practice the riff separately for each chord before playing through the whole progression.



For more information on slapping see ***Progressive Slap Technique*** *by Stephan Richter.*
Extra slapping licks can also be found in ***Progressive Blues Bass Licks.***

SECTION IV
Appendices

Willie Dixon

Appendix I
Tuning

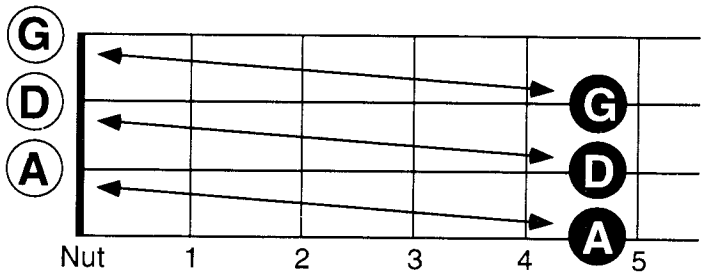
It is essential for your bass to be in tune, so that the notes you play will sound correct. The main problem with tuning for most beginning bass players is that the ear is not able to determine slight differences in pitch. For this reason you should seek the aid of a teacher or an experienced bass player.

Several methods can be used to tune the bass. These include;

1. Tuning to another musical instrument (e.g. a piano, or another guitar).
2. Tuning to a tuning fork or electronic tuner.
3. Tuning the bass to itself.

Tuning the Bass to Itself

The most common and useful of these is the latter; tuning the bass to itself. This method involves finding notes of the same pitch on different strings. The diagram outlines the notes used:

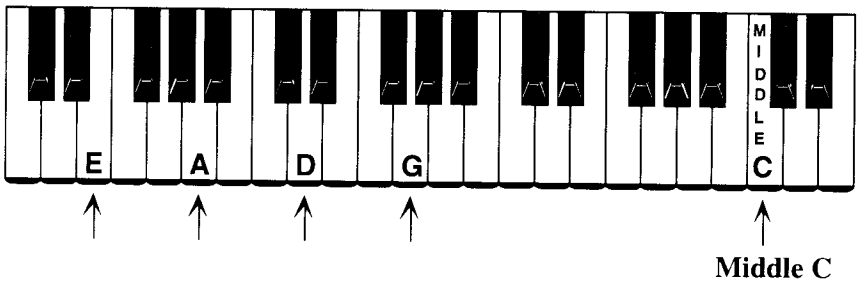


The method of tuning is as follows:

1. Tune the open 4th string to either:
   (a) The open 4th string of another bass.
   (b) A guitar.
   (c) A piano.

On the guitar, the lowest strings correspond to the 4 strings of the bass, (i.e. EADG), but are an octave higher.

On the piano, the notes eqivalent to the open four strings are indicated on the diagram.



2. Place a finger on the 4th string at the 5th fret. Now play the open A 3rd string. If the bass is to be in tune, then these two notes must have the same pitch (i.e. sound the same). If they do not sound the same, the 3rd string must be adjusted to match the note produced on the 4th string, i.e. it is tuned in relation to the 4th string.
3. Tune the open 2nd string to the note on the 5th fret of the 3rd string, using the method outlined above.
4. Tune the open 1st string to the note on the 5th fret of the second string.

Tuning to the Compact Disc or Cassette

At the beginning of the accompanying recording, there is a special tuning section. The correct pitch of each string has been recorded, giving you the opportunity to compare the pitch of each individual string on your bass. As each string is sounded on the recording adjust the pitch of the same string on your bass by turning the corresponding tuning peg. To raise the pitch of the string, the string must be tightened. To lower the pitch of the string, the string must be loosened.

Electronic Tuners

Electronic Tuners make tuning your bass guitar very easy. They indicate the exact pitch of the string. It is still recommended however, that you practice tuning your bass guitar by the above method to help improve your muscianship.

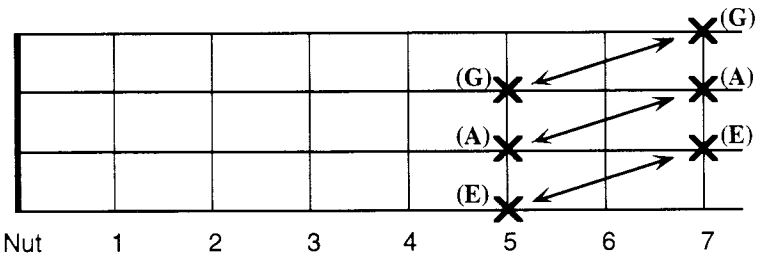
Electronic Tuner

Tuning with Harmonics

An easy way to tune the bass guitar by itself is by using harmonics. Harmonics sound clearer and higher than normal bass notes and therefore their pitch is easier to distinguish. Remember to place your left hand finger exactly over the fret, only lightly touching the string. Pick the note with your right hand close to the bridge to get the clearest, brightest sound. (Let the harmonics ring).

The harmonics used for tuning are located on the 5th and 7th fret.

The 7th fret on the G string =
the 5th fret on the D string.
The 7th fret on the D string =
the 5th fret on the A string.
The 7th fret on the A string =
the 5th fret on the E string.



The notes on the fretboard diagram which are linked together have the same pitch.

When tuning with harmonics always start on the highest string (G string) and adjust the other strings to it. Play the 7th fret on the G string, let it ring and while it is still sounding, play the 5th fret on the next string down (D string). Let both strings ring at the same time. If they are not perfectly in tune you will hear a pulsing (beating) sound. The slower the pulse the closer you are in tune. The aim is to turn the tuning peg of the 2nd string while both strings sound until the "wave" disappears and both strings sound exactly the same.

Once the first two strings are in tune repeat the same process starting on the 7th fret on the D string and adjust the note on the 5th fret on the A string, then do the same again; play the 7th fret on the A string and adjust the 5th fret on the E string until they match.

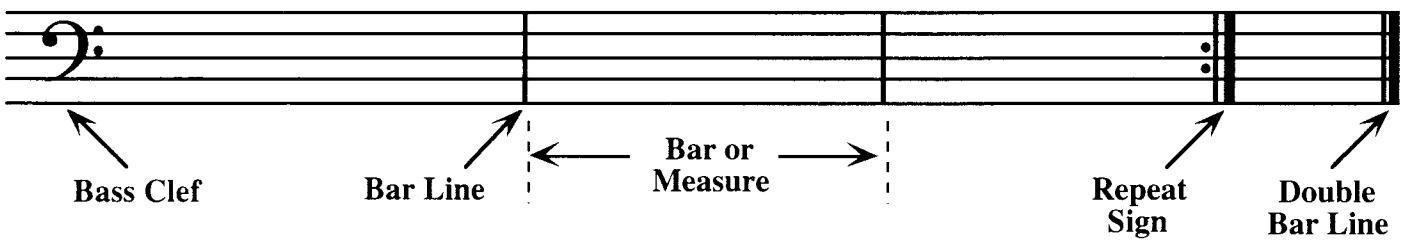
Appendix II

The Basics of Music

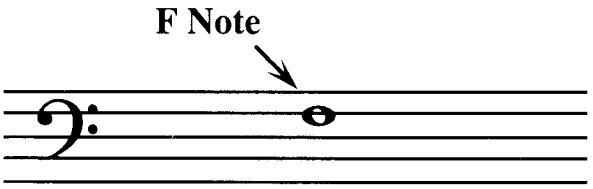
The musical alphabet consists of 7 letters: **A B C D E F G**

Music Staff

Music is written on a **Staff**, which consists of 5 parallel lines and 4 spaces. **Bar Lines** are drawn across the staff, which divide the music into different sections called **Bars** or **Measures**. The end of the music is indicated by a **Double Bar Line**, and two dots placed before a double bar line indicate a **Repeat Sign**. A **Bass Clef** is placed at the beginning of the staff.

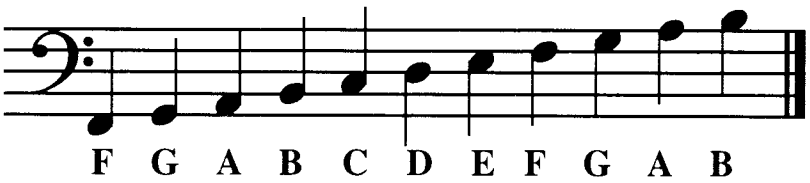


This clef indicates the position of the note F which is on the line in between the two dots.

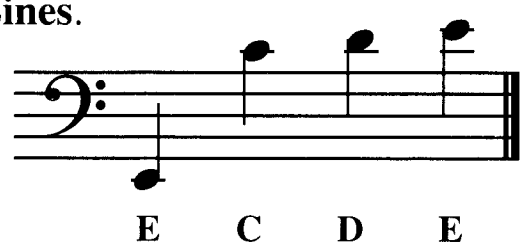


Notes

Notes can be written on the lines or spaces of the staff and are names as such:

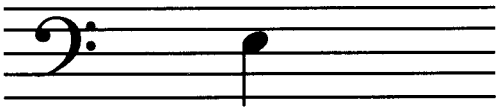


Extra notes can be added by the use of short lines, called **Ledger Lines**.



When a note is placed on the staff its head indicates its position, e.g.

This is a B note

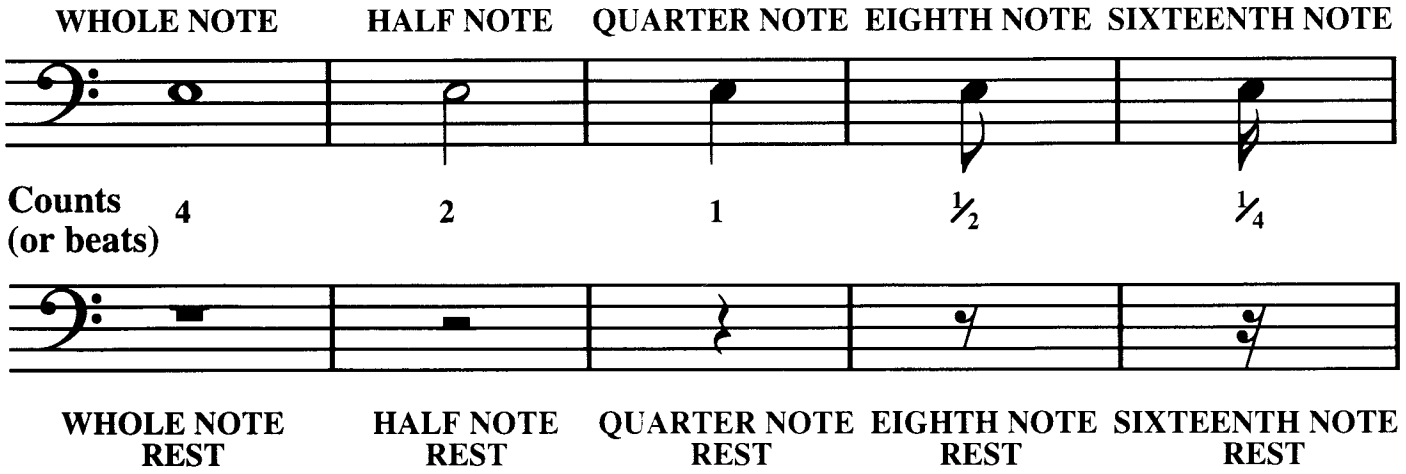


This is an E note

When the note head is below the middle staff line the stem points upward and when the head is above the middle line the stem points downwards. A note placed on the middle line (D) can have its stem pointing either up or down.

Note Values

The table below sets out the most common notes used in music and their respective time values (i.e. length of time held). For each note value there is an equivalent rest, which indicates a period of silence.



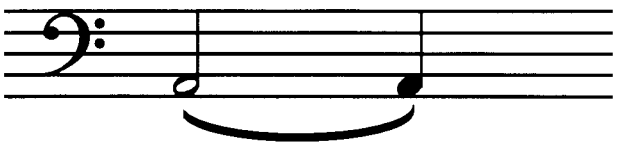
If a dot is placed after a note it increases the value of the note by half of its original value, e.g.

Dotted HALF NOTE **(2 + 1) = 3 counts**

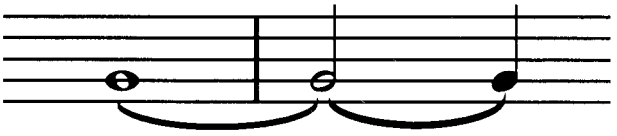
Dotted QUARTER NOTE **(1 + ½) = 1½ counts**

The Tie

A tie is a curved line joining two or more notes of the same pitch. The second note(s) is not played, but its time value is added to that of the first note. Here are two examples:



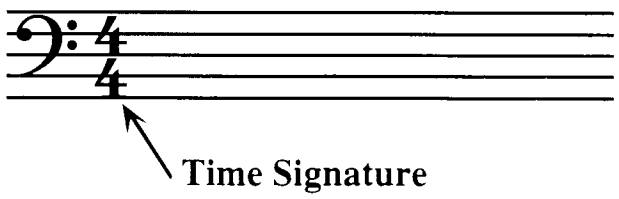
2 + 1 = 3 counts



4 + 2 + 1 = 7 counts

Time Signatures

At the beginning of each piece of music, after the bass clef, is the **time signature.**

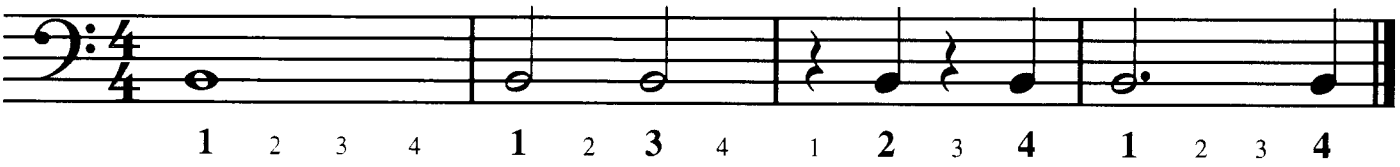


The time signature indicates the number of beats per bar (the top number) and the type of note receiving one beat (the bottom number). For example:

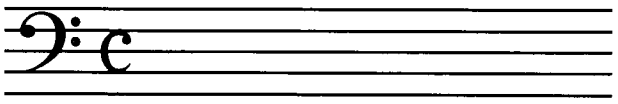
4 — this indicates four beats to the bar.

4 — this indicates that each beat is worth a quarter note.

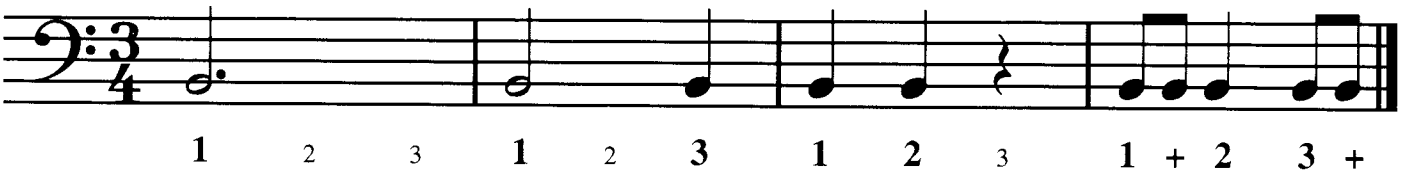
Thus in $\frac{4}{4}$ time there must be the equivalent of 4 quarter notes per bar, e.g.



$\frac{4}{4}$ is the most common time signature and is sometimes represented by the symbol called **common** time.



Another popular time signature is $\frac{3}{4}$ time, indicating 3 quarter note beats per bar. e.g.



Appendix III

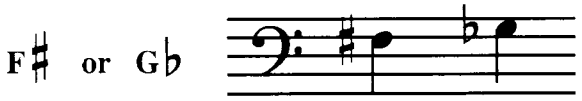
Glossary of Musical Terms

ACCIDENTAL — a sign used to indicate a temporary change in pitch of a note (i.e. sharp ♯, flat ♭, double sharp 𝄪, double flat 𝄫, or natural ♮). The sharps or flats in a key signature are not regarded as accidentals.
AD LIB — to be played at the performer's own discretion.
ARPEGGIO — the playing of a chord in single note fashion.
BAR — A division of music occuring between two bar lines (also called a 'measure').
BAR LINE — a vertical line drawn across the staff which divides the music into equal sections called bars.
BASS — the lower regions of pitch in general.
BASS CLEF — 𝄢 the sign at the beginning of each staff indicating the position of the F note.
CHORD — a combination of three or more different notes played together.
CHORD PROGRESSION — a series of chords played as a musical unit (e.g. as in a song).
CHROMATIC SCALE — a scale ascending and descending in semitones: e.g. C chromatic scale:

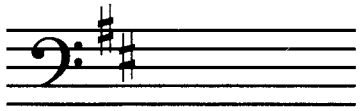
ascending: C C♯ D D♯ E F F♯ G G♯ A A♯ B C
descending: C B B♭ A A♭ G G♭ F E E♭ D D♭ C

D.C. AL FINE — a repeat from the beginning to the word "fine".
DOT — a sign placed after a note indicating that its time value is extended by a half. e.g.

DOUBLE BAR LINE — two vertical lines close together, indicating the end of a piece, or section thereof.
D.S. AL FINE — a repeat from the sign (indicated thus 𝄋) to the word 'fine'.
DURATION — the time value of each note.
DYNAMICS — the varying degrees of softness (indicated by the term 'piano') and loudness (indicated by the term 'forte') in music.
EIGHTH NOTE — a note with the value of half a beat in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, indicated thus ♪ (also called a quaver). The eighth note rest indicating half a beat of silence, is written: 𝄾
ENHARMONIC — describes the difference in notation, but not in pitch, of two notes; e.g.

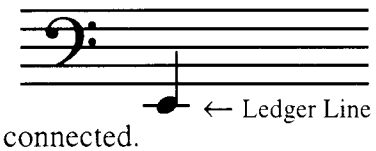


FIRST AND SECOND ENDINGS — signs used where two different endings occur. On the first time through ending one is played (indicated by the bracket 1.); then the progression is repeated and ending two played (indicated by the bracket 2.).
FLAT — a sign (♭) used to lower the pitch of a note by one semitone.
HARMONICS — a chime like sound created by lightly touching a vibrating string at certain points along the fret board.
HARMONY — simultaneous sounding of two or more different notes.
IMPROVISE — to perform spontaneously; i.e. not from memory or from a written copy.
INTERVAL — the distance between any two notes of different pitches.
KEY— describes the notes used in a composition in regards to the major or minor scales from which they are taken; e.g. a piece 'in the key of C major' describes the melody, chords, etc., as predominantly consisting of the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, and B - i.e. from the C scale.
KEY SIGNATURE — a sign, placed at the beginning of each stave of music, directly after the clef, to indicate the key of a piece. The sign consists of a certain number of sharps or flats, which represent the sharps or flats, found in the scale of the piece's key: e.g.

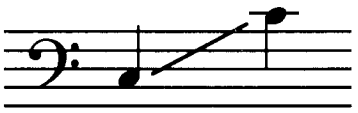


indicates a scale with F♯ and C♯, which is D major or B minor.

LEAD IN — same as pick-up.
LEDGER LINES — small horizontal lines upon which notes are written when their pitch is either above or below the range of the staff, e.g.

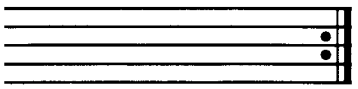


LEGATO — smoothly, well connected.
LYRIC — words that accompany a melody.
MAJOR SCALE — a series of eight notes in alphabetical order based on the interval sequence; tone - tone - semitone - tone - tone - tone - semitone, giving the familiar sound; do re mi fa so la ti do.
MELODY — a sequence of notes varying in pitch and duration, and having a recognizable musical shape.
METRONOME — a device which indicates the number of beats per minute, and which can be adjusted in accordance to the desired tempo, e.g. **MM** (Maelzel Metronome) ♩ = 60 indicates 60 quarter note beats per minute.
NATURAL — a sign(♮) used to cancel out the effect of a sharp or flat. The word is also used to describe the notes A, B , C, D, E, F, and G; i.e. 'the natural notes'.
OCTAVE — the distance between any given note with a set frequency, and another note with exactly double or half that frequency. Both notes will have the same letter name; e.g.



1 Octave

PICK — a small object (often of a triangular shape) made of plastic which is used to pick or strum the strings of a bass.
PICK-UP — a note or notes occuring before the first complete bar. Also called a lead-in.
PITCH — the sound produced by a note, determined by the frequency of the air vibration. The pitch relates to a note being referred to as 'high' or 'low'.
PLECTRUM — same as pick.
REPEAT SIGNS — in music, used to indicate a repeat of a section of music, by means of two dots placed before a double bar line;

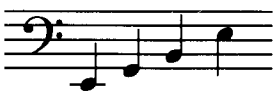


In chord progressions, a repeat sign 𝄎 , indicates an exact repeat of the previous bar.

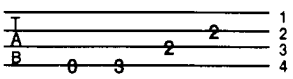
RHYTHM — the aspect of music concerned with tempo, duration and accents of notes. Tempo indicates the speed of a piece (fast or slow); duration indicates the time value of each note (quarter note, eighth note, sixteenth note, etc.); and accents indicate which beat is more predominant.
RIFF — a pattern of notes that is repeated throughout a song.
SEMITONE — the smallest interval used in conventional music. On bass, it is the distance of one fret.
SHARP — a sign (♯) used to raise the pitch of a note by one semitone.
STACCATO — to play short and detached. Indicated by a dot placed above the note.
STAFF — five parallel lines together with four spaces, upon which music is written.
SYNCOPATION — the placing of an accent on a normally unaccented beat. e.g.:

$\frac{4}{4}$ 1 $\overset{>}{2}$ 3 $\overset{>}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ 1 + 2 $\overset{>}{+}$ 3 $\overset{>}{+}$

TABLATURE — a system of writing music which represents the position of the player's fingers (not the pitch of the notes, but their position on the bass). A chord diagram is a type of tablature. Notes can also be written using tablature thus;



Music Notation



Tablature

Each line represents a string, and each number represents a fret.

TEMPO — the speed of a piece.
TIE — a curved line joining two or more notes of the same pitch.
TIME SIGNATURE — a sign at the beginning of a piece which indicates, by means of numbers, the number of beats per bar (top figure), and the type of note receiving one beat (bottom figure).
TONE — a distance of two frets; i.e. the equivalent of two semitones.
TRANSPOSITION — the process of changing music from one key to another.
TREBLE — the upper regions of pitch in general.

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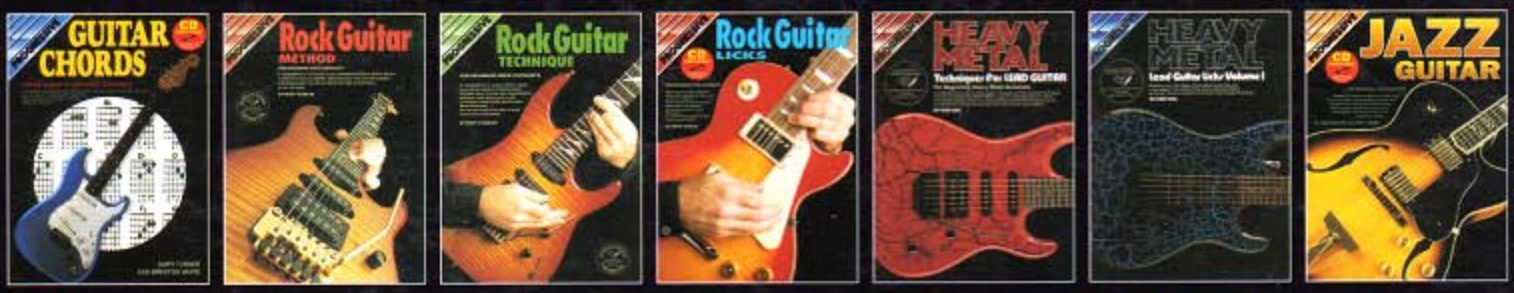

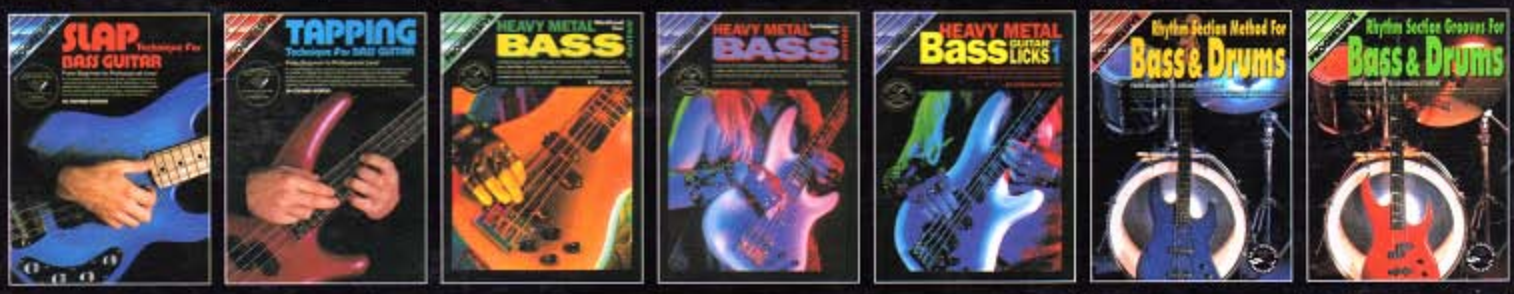

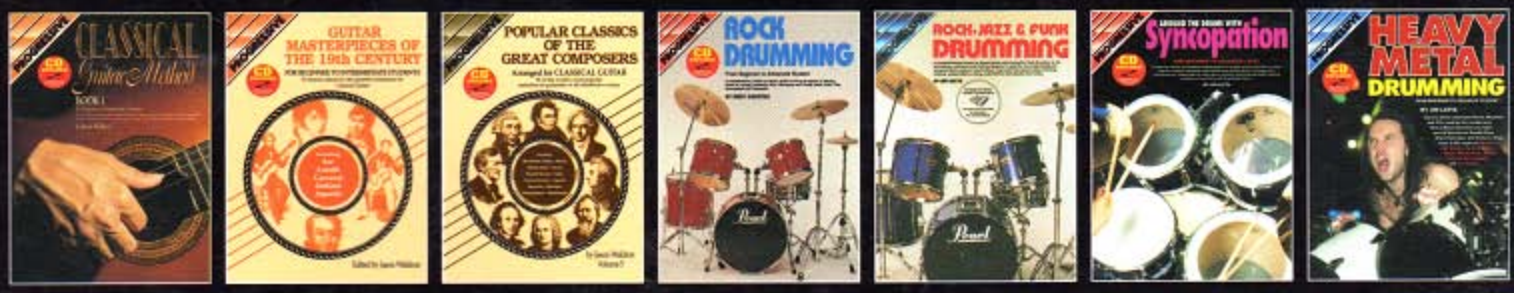

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